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# NOTTINGHAM FILM THEATRE

NOTTINGHAM FILM THEATRE BROAD STREET NOTTINGHAM FRIDAY FILMS SEPT/DEC 1977

Friday evening screenings from 30th September 1977 through to March 1978 will be devoted to a closely related series of films which in different ways reflect a world wide struggle against imperialism in all its many forms. By choosing 'imperialism' we have been able to select from a very rich source of films and to present them as a number of films in a particular context. The season will be backed up with an extensive programme booklet which will be available at the Film Theatre and bookshops. In 1978 formal/political issues implicitly raised in the 1977 films will be examined more closely through films such as Man with a Movie Camera, Vent D'Est, Strike and Night Cleaners.

ALL FILMS ARE FRIDAYS 7.30 EXCEPT BATTLE OF CHILE ON 11 NOVEMBER STARTS AT 6.30

PRICES:  
PUBLIC 60p  
MEMBERS 50p  
STUDENTS 45p

## CHALLENGE TO IMPERIALISM

### ANTONIO DAS MORTES

FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 7.30 Brazil 95min

Antonio Das Mortes, a mercenary killer is hired by a tyrannical landowner to suppress a revolt. After executing its leader, he transfers his allegiance to the oppressed rebels and takes up their cause against the landowner and his thugs. In the final battle he assumes a mythical stature.

'In Antonio Das Mortes I did a great deal of research on popular theatre, the moral and psychological behaviour and attitudes of the peasants, their poetry, music, language and so forth. I used the popular theatre form to express a realistic picture of the emotions of the people as they faced their own problems'. Glauber Rocha, director, writing in Cineaste.

Ironically the financial backing for this film was from West German TV.

### THE GUNS

FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER 7.30 110min

This film is about the twin oppressors, mysticism and armed force, the failure of an individual's revolutionary act and the more significant revolutionary act of the peasants: In a Brazilian village soldiers guard the Mayor's produce while starving peasants follow a sacred ox in the belief that it will bring rain. In the end the peasants kill the ox and eat it. Ruy Guerra's film is a major work and particularly important as one of the films which introduced Cinema Nova.

### IRELAND BEHIND THE WIRE

FRIDAY 4 NOVEMBER 7.30 100min

There are two aims with this film: First to remind us of the reasons why the civil rights movement in Ulster in 1968/9 had such support and was pursued so fearlessly by working class people. Second to expose the violently repressive role of the British Army and to put an end to the vicious myth of 'peace keeping'. The Berwick Street Film Collective shows these things through the eyes and words of working class people in Derry and Belfast.

### EMITAI

FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER 7.30 102min

Based on an actual event at the end of World War 2 in Senegal when the French Army demanded rice from the villagers who turned in vain to their gods for help. When the rice is no longer needed, discipline still has to be maintained amongst the 'natives'. The result is the kind of mindless tragedy that has haunted colonized people for centuries. This is a truly important film of revolution with one of the best and clearest views of what the raising of consciousness is about. By Ousmane Sembene.

### BLOOD OF THE CONDOR

FRIDAY 14 OCTOBER 7.30 74min

With great power Jorge Sangines shows in this film the premeditated extermination of the Bolivian Quechua Indians by North American 'Peace Corps' doctors who sterilise the women in a maternity hospital without them knowing what is being done to them; how the realisation of this affects the villagers and their relationship with the ruling, monied minority and the city.

### BATTLE OF CHILE 1&2

FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER 6.30

Part 1 106min Part 2 99min

Patricio Guzman's moving documentary retraces the last tense months of the Allende government as it tries to push its socialist programme through the vetos of Congress and the opposition's campaign of economic disruption. The film is a searing indictment of collusion against democracy between the CIA, the opposition and the armed forces. It also challenges any notion of a parliamentary road to socialism.

### BATTLE OF THE TEN MILLION

FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER 7.30 58min

A well argued account of the Cuban revolution looked at through a single event: Castro's attempt to raise the 1970 sugar harvest from around 4½ million tons to an all time high of 10 million tons. Made by the SLON/ISKRA film co-op which grew out of filming the May 1968 events in France.

### WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER (With Battle of 10 Million) 41min

Carlos Alvarez investigates Columbian 'democracy' over the last 40 years. He ridicules the 'protective' role of USAF in stamping out subversion and the Columbian establishment who allow their government to be manipulated by 'uncle Sam'. And he parades the farces of several presidential elections.

### MINAMATA

FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 7.30 122min.

What became known as Minamata disease is mercury poisoning from industrial effluent. Its effect on a Japanese fishing community was concentrated and devastating. Noriaki Tsuchimoto shows how private incapacity is gradually transformed into public political action. Eventually the political and economic motives which first introduced mercury poisoning to the fishing community are challenged on their own ground.

### LETTER TO JANE

FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER 7.30

A filmic letter by Godard which is a critical response to a newspaper photograph of Jane Fonda with the North Vietnamese shortly after finishing her work with Godard in Tout Va Bien. It poses some problems of how images are understood and manipulated and of how film can be analysed politically. But, the criticism is of Jane as a function not as a person. 55min

### VIETNAM JOURNEY

FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER (with Letter to Jane)

A record of the journey Jane Fonda made to North Vietnam in 1974 when 'popular' criticism of this imperialist war was at its height. Filmed by Haskell Wexler 60m





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# INTRODUCTION

This introduction makes little pretence to be anything more than a few notes setting out the ideas behind a programme of films, 'Challenge to Imperialism', and an attempt to raise several questions which are relevant to the relations between imperialism and film. Together with the selection of articles, reviews and interviews which follow, it is intended to begin to open out a process of interrogation. Many contradictory views are expressed in these pages and a real working through of those contradictions both at the level of film-making and theory remains to be done.

Of particular importance, however, is an understanding of the fact that such a process could not separate film and politics. It is not coincidental that the conception of film-making as guerilla activity, the camera as gun, voiced, for instance, by Cetino and Solanas, (see 'Towards a 3rd cinema') became a dominant notion in left film-making in Latin America during the period when guerilla warfare was decidedly 'on the agenda' in the 1960's.

One of the essential objects of programming these films as part of a lengthy season (September to April) was to try to break away from the notion of the single film as 'work of art'. In general, in so far as they are screened at all in Europe, films from the so called Third World are plucked out of their context and advertised, appraised and understood in terms of art (an idealist conception of art which denies the relevance of history, and political and ideological context) a process which, even if unconsciously, re-enacts an aspect of imperialism itself. It is noticeable that this de-politicising practice requires a cultural distance to be successful - whereas the films of Rocha and Sembene, safely removed from the context of North Brazil and Senegal, can be sold as 'art' in Paris, London and New York, the same can not be said of 'Ireland Behind the Wire' which, in Britain certainly, would be difficult to recuperate to bourgeois art - hence its distribution has been principally outside cinema circuits.

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FRIDAY FILMS AT NOTTINGHAM FILM THEATRE 'CHALLENGE TO IMPERIALISM' SEPT/NOV 1977

Film programme and programme notes selected by John Clark, Alan Fountain, Laurie Hayward, Brian Lee and Tom Wilson. Introduction by Alan Fountain, Graphics by John Clark, Booklet slung together by Tom Wilson. Many thanks for support from the British Film Institute, East Midlands Arts and Nottingham Film Theatre admin.

NOTTINGHAM FILM THEATRE, 19 HEATHCOTE ST, Tel 46095. THEATRE ENTRANCE: BROAD ST.



Another important factor in the acceptability of many of these films to Western audiences is precisely the degree to which they are 'recognisable' as 'art', or failing that, humanist documentary. Rocha, Guerra and Sanjines, for instance, have been criticised for producing work which in its style, its 'look', its construction, and in some cases its mysticism, is acceptable to Western bourgeois taste. Indeed, Rocha's fame in European art circles preceded his introduction to many Latin American countries. Apparently more overtly 'political' films like 'The Hour of the Furnaces', 'Battle of Chile' and 'What is Democracy?' are rather more difficult to treat simply as art, a cultural reflex which relies on an ideological separation between art and politics which such films refuse.

How can we avoid reproducing these errors? One means of doing so is to attempt to come to grips with the numerous contradictions that undoubtedly do surround such screenings. This entails an examination of the context out of which the films were produced, their function in different parts of the world and their use to us now.

Imperialism as it is understood today has its roots in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - the period of the Conquest and colonisation by the Western powers of huge areas of the rest of the world, a period which saw the ravaging of Latin America by the Spanish and Portuguese, a similar process by Holland, Germany, Britain and France in Asia and Africa, the start of the slave trade by the British and the establishment of that other colony, North America. During the nineteenth century the process of colonisation advanced very rapidly as the search for raw materials and minerals (part of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and, later, the United States) dramatically increased.

In the second third of the twentieth century, more especially since the Second World War, the Western capitalist states have been confronted with resistance to direct colonial rule. The response has been the development of neo-colonisation - economic and cultural colonisation. In general this has been made possible by the co-operation of the national bourgeoisie inside the 'colonised' states. The

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In this booklet we have published what we hope is helpful background material, where possible, from the film maker himself. The uneven coverage of the films is because of a scarcity of worthwhile material rather than a specific bias against certain films.



United States has become the major exponent of this form of exploitation and on a world-wide basis has 'recruited' the ruling middle-class to represent its interests. Clear examples existed in South Vietnam and continue to be operative throughout Latin America, and large parts of Africa and South East Asia. Ultimately, economic interests are safeguarded by military intervention. On a lesser level the major West European states operate in the same way (for a more detailed examination of these historical processes in relation to one country, Chile, see Chilean Cinema, edited by Michael Chanan.)

The results of centuries of exploitation take effect in several ways. At the economic level, where countries are stripped of resources but where profits can be based on cheap, unorganised labour (where a sufficient number of a population achieves a higher living standard the Third World also becomes an important market for the capitalist West). At the cultural level, national cultures (art forms and language itself) are repressed in favour of the adoption of European culture by the middle-class, or are merely plundered for sale in a new context in Europe and the United States.

The cultural and economic levels are of course inextricably related; the loss of a sense of identity through language and culture being a useful prerequisite to 'voluntary' submission. The more the culture associated with Western Europe and the United States seems 'natural' and 'acceptable' - 'one's own' - the less resistance to neo-colonisation is possible. This identification is particularly true of the ruling middle-classes but much less so of the more bitterly exploited workers and peasants in the Third World. Sanjines noted that "It is the minority of whites who, by monopolising all of the power, are cutting Bolivia off from its true cultural identity. This minority slavishly follows the policies and ideas of the United States".

Bearing in mind the class position of most of the Third World film-makers - often educated in Europe - Solanas' comment is also of particular relevance: "The battle begins without, against the enemy who attacks us, but also within, against the ideas and model of the enemy to be found inside each one of us". Miguel Littin,



one of the leading Chilean directors, saw the role of Latin American cinema as that of producing "works which would serve the liberation of Latin America and express their position against imperialism and against the national oligarchies. At the same time it was a question of retrieving our own identity as people and recovering our cultural identity, because our culture seemed crushed by United States cultural imperialism".

It is clear that imperialism has been a ruthless and effective process, through its colonisation of state, body and mind. The political, economic and ideological layers have functioned as complementary to each other in the attempt to maintain the dominance of capitalism in the Third World. Richard Gott in Rural Guerrillas in Latin America (p 23 Penguin 1973) gives an indication of this process: "Through an all embracing aid system that not only trains the Latin American soldier but also recommends what text-book his child shall read - thus effectively governing the cultural environment in which the bulk of the literate population must live - the United States controls as absolutely as any previous monopolistic power".

Having glanced briefly at the political-historical context in which this programme of films can be roughly located, it is possible to return to the films themselves, or rather to the institution of the cinema and the way in which the relations between it and imperialism might be broached:-

i) Initially 'national cinema' in the Third World barely existed, if at all. Although in some instances large cinema chains existed (principally in parts of Latin America) these were invariably under the control of and for the distribution of films from the United States. Even where films were produced they invariably reproduced the capitalistic models - a testament to the efficiency of cultural imperialism.

At the same time the dominance of the North American film industry throughout the capitalist West (even where it could not dominate totally it ensured the 'co-operation' of an indigenous example - Britain being an outstanding example) ensured that the



ideological/cultural task of capitalism could be accomplished. On one hand it needed to represent the 'colonies' to audiences in the industrial West - essentially a task of creating a picture of happy but backward 'natives' or, in periods of crisis, murderous savages - and on the other to inundate Third World countries with Western films, simultaneously destroying national cultures and imbuing the moral, religious, sexual, political and economic values of the West. Alongside these went the process of 'recruiting' Third World intellectuals to European art and in particular an acceptance of the notion of a separation of art and politics.

ii) The process of political, economic and ideological control can obviously not remain totally intact - the development of direct colonial rule to neo-colonialism, the demand for greater national state power (i.e. Peron, Nasser), the world-wide increase in worker and peasant resistance (particularly in the wake of the Cuban revolution, the defeats of France and the USA in Vietnam, and the victory of Algeria against the French) seriously shook the comparative ease with which the capitalist West had ruled hitherto.

This was at least part of the background from which a new cinema in parts of the Third World began to grow, a cinema with which we associate 'Antonio das Mortes', 'The Guns', 'Blood of the Condor' and 'Emitai'. What unites this group of films, which range across a period of ten years and geographically across two continents, is precisely a resistance to imperialism. Each, perhaps above all else, is concerned with the identity, the history, the exploitation of its own people.

It is important, however, not to blur over the very great differences between them or to fail to examine the difference between them and, for example, 'Battle of Chile', 'What is Democracy?' or 'Hour of the Furnaces'

The 'Cinema Novo' films of the early and mid 1960's, of which 'Antonio Das Mortes' is a classic example, made their reputation very largely in Europe. Their political use-value has been recently examined more critically (see the 'Pitfalls of Cultural Nationalism' in this booklet). However, the role that this early movement played, especially



in Latin America, was nevertheless valuable. Most of the Third World film-makers of the 1960's and 70's looked to Rocha as an inspirational figure; but perhaps more important, and in this lies its importance to film-makers, 'Cinema Novo' was an ideological blow of considerable importance:- "There is little question that Rocha's films and Cinema Novo generally constitute a successful attempt at cultural decolonisation", but "while all reclamations of a national culture constitute a first step in establishing a national identity and consciousness, it does not follow that all cultural expositions have meaningful political effects". (Pitfalls of Cultural Nationalism. See also 'Interview with Miguel Littin' in Chilean Cinema, ed. Michael Chanan).

The subsequent development of a great deal of Latin American cinema, in important respects, took a more directly political turn: the political use-value of film came to be considered as more important than its function as art object. Under the impact of a turn to guerilla warfare in many countries of Latin America, the conception of film as gun and film-makers and distributors as guerilla fighters resulted in marked formal and political changes in many of the films produced. (see 'Towards a 3rd Cinema' and interviews with Jorge Sanjines; also 'Chilean Cinema', edited by Michael Channan).

With this change of direction came a reconsideration of the audiences for and with whom the films were made. Obviously, unless screenings could be fairly wide and principally for the peasants, workers and revolutionary intellectuals, there was little point in making them. 'Blood of the Condor' was in fact seen by more people than any other film ever to be shown in Bolivia. Latin American film-makers in the late 1960's and early 1970's became concerned with trying to produce concrete knowledge for their audience, often combined with a quite direct call to armed resistance. Alongside this development went a concern to deal politically with the history of their countries. Many of the articles and interviews in this booklet explain the move to a more militant stance in the period following 'Cinema Novo'.

The increased overt political concerns (and perhaps effect) of the left Latin American films has resulted in the most terrible repression of a whole generation of film-makers (see 'In Latin America They Shoot Film-Makers'). American-backed dictatorships have re-asserted



their strength, the most glaring example being Chile, a country which produced 'Battle of Chile' - a work of analysis which accurately pinpoints the role of the Chilean Right bourgeoisie and the United States government in the destruction of Allende's democracy.

iii) Imperialism, as already noted, relies for its success in part upon the compliance of the population of the imperialist power. Opposition on a wide scale at 'home', perhaps to the point of a war on two fronts, threatens essential domestic stability. The outstanding example in recent years was of course the Vietnam War: the massive anti-war movement which spread throughout Europe, Japan and Australia played a vital role in the American defeat. The lack of opposition in the early years of the Algerian War and currently in Britain in relation to Northern Ireland has just the reverse effect.

Film can be crucial to the development of a domestic opposition. Some of the television reports and films made in Vietnam and shown in the United States probably contributed to the rise of the anti-war movement. Hala Salmane (see 'On Colonial Cinema' in this booklet) sees the failure of French film-makers during the Algerian War as supportive of French imperialism.

'Ireland Behind the Wire' falls precisely into this category of work, as it sets out to portray the oppression of the Catholics and the role of the British Army in Northern Ireland. It has been one of the few films to be seen in Britain which does not portray the 'official line'. Jane Fonda was one of many film-makers who made films in support of North Vietnam and exposed the United States imperialist role there during the Vietnam War.

An important element in the rise of Third World cinema has been the inspiring contribution of countries and film-makers from outside the directly oppressed areas, and the immediate site of conflict. One can mention Chris Marker and the SLON group (see 'SLON: working class cinema in France'), Joris Ivens and the Cuban documentary director, Santiago Alvarez. Their contributions should be analysed separately but taken together include: making films directly concerned with Third World struggles (i.e. Marker's 'Battle of the 10 Million', Alvarez' 'Hasta La Victoria Siempre' and 'The Tiger Pounced and Killed But He'll Die, He'll Die'); establishing bases for oppositional film



practice within imperialist states (i.e. SLON, Cinema Action); introducing equipment to, and training film-makers in the Third World - something both Ivens and Marker have done, and has been one of the contributions of Cuba towards Latin American struggle. (The crucial role of Cuba both politically and ideologically in Latin America and Africa deserves a closer analysis than is possible here). The total of this activity is aptly described by Cetino and Solanas (see 'Towards a 3rd Cinema'): "The question of whether or not militant cinema was possible before the revolution began to be replaced, at least within small groups, by the question of whether or not such a cinema was necessary to contribute to the possibility of revolution. An affirmative answer was the starting point for the first attempts to channel the process of seeking possibilities in numerous countries. Examples are Newsreel, a US new-left film group, the CINEGIORNALI of the Italian student movement, the films made by the *Etats Généraux du Cinéma Français*, and those of the British and Japanese student movements, all a continuation and deepening of the work of a Joris Ivens or a Chris Marker. Let it suffice to observe the film of a Santiago Alvarez in Cuba, or the cinema being developed by different film-makers in "the homeland of all", as Bolivar would say, as they seek a revolutionary Latin-American cinema".

iv) The question of the role of intellectuals (including within that category film-makers) in the struggle against imperialism is by no means straightforward. The notes, above, and some of the articles and interviews following this introduction (see also *Chilean Cinema*, ed. Michael Channan) introduce the debate on this issue in the Third World, a debate which has centred in particular around two crucial questions: first, the level of identification that film-makers and their work achieve with the oppressed classes and sectors; second, and closely related, the degree to which political film must break with the concerns of bourgeois art.

The questions for film-makers living and working outside the Third World include these but inevitably have to be posed from a different perspective. Obviously, information which counters official propaganda about events in the oppressed nations is of considerable importance,

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NOTE: The views expressed in this introduction and in the booklet as a whole do not necessarily represent the views of the Nottingham Film Theatre Management Committee.



hence the apparent value of films like 'Vietnam Journey', 'Ireland Behind the Wire' and 'In the Year of the Pig'. The vital question, however, is what effect such films actually have, and this depends to a great extent on the way they are made (i.e. for who, from whom, to who) and the context in which they are shown.

These problems are raised in the last film in the programme, 'Letter to Jane', which deals not with a film but with a photograph and news report of one of Jane Fonda's visits to Vietnam. One very clear point of view which emerges from the film is that in order to assist North Vietnam it is important to begin 'at home' in the West. A function that Western intellectuals can perform is to begin a Marxist analysis of the media and, as a result, the beginning of the construction of a practice of ideological as well as political resistance - precisely the work that Godard, among others, has been engaged in for the last seven or eight years.

The essential point of this argument is that imperialism depends upon ideological as well as economic and political dominance. To begin to understand and fight against dominant ideological practices and forms (which returns us to the near world-wide economic and ideological/formal dominance of North American film) is to play an important part in the defeat of imperialism. It is, incidentally, this line of reasoning that has lead the Berwick Street Collective to turn from the left documentary approach of 'Ireland Behind the Wire' to a concern with ideological/formal questions in 'The Nightcleaners', one of the films to be shown in the second part of our season.

It is these questions among others that will be posed more concretely in the second part of the season: through an examination of a range of 'political film' (i.e. 'Ice', 'Vent d'Est', 'Man With a Movie Camera', 'Cinetracts', 'Strike', 'Machorka Muff') we hope to raise some questions related to film form and ideological struggle.

Without going more deeply into these questions in this introduction, it may well be the case that several approaches in film are appropriate, in different contexts, to the defeat of imperialism - that a film like 'Battle of Chile', which seems to treat the camera as an eye onto the world, is equally as valuable as the work of Godard or Straub which treats the central question of representation as itself highly problematic. This leads us once more to the audience: what and who is a film for, in what context is it shown and how is it or should it be understood?

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## INTRODUCTION

Just a short time ago it would have seemed like a Quixotic adventure in the colonised, neocolonised, or even the imperialist nations themselves to make any attempt to create films of decolonisation that turned their back on or actively opposed the System. Until recently, film had been synonymous with show or amusement: in a word, it was one more consumer good. At best, films succeeded in bearing witness to the decay of bourgeois values and testifying to social injustice. As a rule, films only dealt with effect, never with cause; it was cinema of mystification or anti-historicism. It was surplus value cinema. Caught up in these conditions, films, the most valuable tool of communication of our times, were destined to satisfy only the ideological and economic interests of the owners of the film industry, the lords of the world film market, the great majority of whom were from the United States.

Was it possible to overcome this situation? How could the problem of turning out liberation films be approached when costs came to several thousand dollars and the distribution and exhibition channels were in the hands of the enemy? How could the continuity of work be guaranteed? How could the public be reached? How could System-imposed repression and censorship be vanquished? These questions, which could be multiplied in all directions, led and still lead many people to scepticism or rationalisation: "revolutionary films cannot be made before the revolution"; "revolutionary films have been possible only in the liberated countries"; "without the support of revolutionary political power, revolutionary films or art is impossible." The mistake was due to taking the same approach to reality and films as did the bourgeoisie. The models of production, distribution, and exhibition continued to be those of Hollywood precisely because, in ideology and politics, films had not yet become the vehicle for a clearly drawn differentiation between bourgeois ideology and politics. A reformist policy, as manifested in dialogue with the adversary, in coexistence, and in the relegation of national contradictions to those between two supposedly unique blocs - the USSR and the USA - was and is unable to produce anything but a cinema within the System itself. At best, it can be the 'progressive' wing of Establishment cinema. When all is said and done, such cinema was doomed to wait until the world conflict was resolved peacefully in favour of socialism in order to change qualitatively. The most daring attempts of those film makers who strove to conquer the fortress of official cinema ended, as Jean-Luc Godard eloquently put it, with the film makers themselves "trapped inside the fortress".

But the questions that were recently raised appeared promising; they arose from a new historical situation to which the film maker, as is often the case with the educated strata of our countries, was rather a late-comer: ten years of the Cuban Revolution, the Vietnamese struggle, and the development of a worldwide liberation movement whose moving force is to be found in the Third World countries. The existence

of masses on the world-wide revolutionary plane was the substantial fact without which those questions could not have been posed. A new historical situation and a new man born in the process of the anti-imperialist struggle demanded a new, revolutionary attitude from the film makers of the world. The question of whether or not militant cinema was possible before the revolution began to be replaced, at least within small groups, by the question of whether or not such a cinema was necessary to contribute to the possibility of revolution. An affirmative answer was the starting point for the first attempts to channel the process of seeking possibilities in numerous countries. Examples are Newsreel, a US new-left film group, the CINEGIORNALI of the Italian student movement, the films made by the Etats Généraux du Cinéma Français, and those of the British and Japanese student movements, all a continuation and deepening of the work of a Joris Ivens or a Chris Marker. Let it suffice to observe the films of a Santiago Alvarez in Cuba, or the cinema being developed by different film makers in "the homeland of all", as Bolivar would say, as they seek a revolutionary Latin-American cinema.

## 'THEIRS' AND 'OURS'

A profound debate on the role of intellectuals and artists before liberation today is enriching the perspectives of intellectual work all over the world. However, this debate oscillates between two poles: one which proposes to relegate all intellectual work capacity to a specifically political or political-military function, denying perspectives to all artistic activity with the idea that such activity must ineluctably be absorbed by the System, and the other which maintains an inner duality of the intellectual: on the one hand, the 'work of art', 'the privilege of beauty', an art and a beauty which are not necessarily bound to the needs of the revolutionary political process, and, on the other, a political commitment which generally consists in signing certain anti-imperialist manifestoes. In practice, this point of view means the separation of politics and art.

This polarity rests, as we see it, on two omissions: first, the conception of culture, science, art and cinema as univocal and universal terms, and, second, an insufficiently clear idea of the fact that the revolution does not begin with the taking of political power from imperialism and the bourgeoisie, but rather begins at the moment when the masses sense the need for change and their intellectual vanguards begin to study and carry out this change through activities on different fronts.

Culture, art, science and cinema always respond to conflicting class interests. In the neocolonial situation two concepts of culture, art, science and cinema compete: that of the rulers and that of the nation. And this situation will continue, as long as the national concept is not identified with that of the rulers, as long as the status of colony or semi-colony continues in force. Moreover, the duality will be overcome and will reach a single and universal category only when the best



values of man emerge from proscription to achieve hegemony, when the liberation of man is universal. In the meantime, there exist our culture and their culture, our cinema and their cinema. Because our culture is an impulse towards emancipation, it will remain in existence until emancipation is a reality: a culture of subversion which will carry with it an art, a science, and a cinema of subversion.

The lack of awareness in regard to these dualities generally leads the intellectual to deal with artistic and scientific expressions as they were universally conceived by the classes that rule the world, at best introducing some correction into these expressions. We have not gone deeply enough into developing a revolutionary theatre, architecture, medicine, psychology and cinema; into developing a culture by and for us. The intellectual takes each of these forms of expression as a unit to be corrected from within the expression itself, and not from without, with its own new methods and models.

An astronaut or a Ranger mobilises all the scientific resources of imperialism. Psychologists, doctors, politicians, sociologists, mathematicians, and even artists are thrown into the study of everything that serves, from the vantage point of different specialities, the preparation of an orbital flight or the massacre of Vietnamese; in the long run, all of these specialties are equally employed to satisfy the needs of imperialism. In Buenos Aires the army eradicates villas miseria (urban shanty towns) and in their place puts up 'strategic hamlets' with urbanised setups aimed at facilitating military intervention when the time comes. The revolutionary organisations lack specialised fronts in the Establishment's medicine, engineering, psychology and art - not to mention the development of our own revolutionary engineering, psychology, art and cinema. In order to be effective, all these fields must recognise the priorities of each stage; those required by the struggle for power or those demanded by the already victorious revolution. Examples: creating a political sensitivity as awareness of the need to undertake a political military struggle in order to take power; intensifying all the modern resources of medical science to prepare people with optimum levels of health and physical efficiency, ready for combat in rural or urban zones; co-ordinating energies to achieve a production of ten million tons of sugar, as is happening in Cuba; or elaborating an architecture, a city planning, that will be able to withstand the massive air raids that imperialism can launch at any time. The specific strengthening of each specialty and field subordinate to collective priorities can fill the empty spaces caused by the struggle for liberation and can delineate with greatest efficacy the role of the intellectual in our time. It is evident that revolutionary mass-level culture and awareness can only be achieved after the taking of political power, but it is no less true that the use of scientific and artistic means, together with political-military means, prepares the terrain for the revolution to become reality and facilitates the solution of the problems that will arise with the taking of power.

The intellectual must find through his action the field in which he can rationally perform the most efficient work. Once the front has been determined, his next task is to find out within that front exactly what is the enemy's stronghold and where and how he must deploy his forces. It is in this harsh and dramatic daily search that a culture of the revolution will be able to emerge, the basis which will nurture, beginning right now, the new man exemplified by Che - not man in the abstract, not the 'liberation of man', but another man, capable of arising from the ashes of the old, alienated man that we are and which the new man will destroy - by starting to stoke the fire today.

The anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. Third cinema is, in our opinion, the cinema that recognises in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point - in a word, the decolonisation of culture.

#### NEO-COLONIAL CONSTRUCTS IN ARGENTINA: FIRST AND SECOND CINEMA

Culture and cinema are national not because they are located within certain geographical limits, but when they respond to the particular needs of development and liberation of each people. The cinema which is today dominant in our countries, set up to accept and justify dependence, the origin of all underdevelopment, can be nothing but a dependent and underdeveloped cinema.

While, during the early history (or the prehistory) of the cinema, it was possible to speak of a German, an Italian, or a Swedish cinema clearly differentiated and corresponding to specific national characteristics, today such differences have disappeared. The borders were wiped out along with the expansion of US imperialism and the film model that it imposed: Hollywood movies. In our times it is hard to find a film within the field of commercial cinema, including what is known as 'author's cinema', in both the capitalist and socialist countries, that manages to avoid the models of Hollywood pictures. The latter have such a fast hold that monumental works such as the USSR's Bondarchuk's *WAR AND PEACE* are also monumental examples of the submission to all the propositions imposed by the US movie industry (structure, language, etc) and, consequently, to its concepts.

The placing of the cinema within US models, even in the formal aspect, in language, leads to the adoption of the ideological forms that gave rise to precisely that language and no other. Even the appropriation of models which appear to be only technical, industrial, scientific, etc leads to a conceptual dependency situation, due to the fact that the cinema is an industry, but differs from other industries in that it has



been created and organised in order to generate certain ideologies. The 35mm camera, 24 frames a second, arc lights, and a commercial place of exhibition for audiences were conceived not to gratuitously transmit any ideology, but to satisfy, in the first place, the cultural and surplus value needs of a specific ideology, of a specific world-view: that of US financial capital.

The mechanistic takeover of a cinema conceived as a show to be exhibited in large theatres with a standard duration, hermetic structures that are born and die on the screen, satisfies, to be sure, the commercial interests of the production groups, but it also leads to the absorption of forms of the bourgeois world-view which are the continuation of 19th century art, of bourgeois art: man is accepted only as a passive and consuming object; rather than having his ability to make history recognised, he is only permitted to read history, contemplate it, listen to it, and undergo it. The cinema as a spectacle aimed at a digesting object is the highest point that can be reached by bourgeois film making. The world, existence, and the historic process are enclosed within the frame of a painting, the same stage of a theatre, and the movie screen; man is viewed as a consumer of ideology, and not as the creator of ideology. This notion is the starting point for the wonderful interplay of bourgeois philosophy and the obtaining of surplus value. The result is a cinema studied by motivational analysts, sociologists and psychologists, by the endless researchers of the dreams and frustrations of the masses, all aimed at selling movie-life, reality as it is conceived by the ruling classes.

The first alternative to this type of cinema, which we could call the first cinema, arose with the so-called 'author's cinema', 'expression cinema', 'nouvelle vague', 'cinema novo', or, conventionally, the second cinema. This alternative signified a step forward inasmuch as it demanded that the film maker be free to express himself in non-standard language and inasmuch as it was an attempt at cultural decolonisation. But such attempts have already reached, or are about to reach, the outer limits of what the system permits. The second cinema film maker has remained "trapped inside the fortress" as Godard put it, or is on his way to becoming trapped. The search for a market of 200,000 moviegoers in Argentina, a figure that is supposed to cover the costs of an independent local production, the proposal of developing a mechanism of industrial production parallel to that of the System but which would be distributed by the System according to its own norms, the struggle to better the laws protecting the cinema and replacing 'bad officials' by 'less bad' etc is a search lacking in viable prospects, unless you consider viable the prospect of becoming institutionalised as 'the youthful, angry wing of society' - that is, of neocolonialised or capitalist society.

Real alternatives differing from those offered by the System are only possible if one of two requirements is fulfilled: making films that the

System cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its needs, or making films that directly and explicitly set out to fight the System. Neither of these requirements fits within the alternatives that are still offered by the second cinema, but they can be found in the revolutionary opening towards a cinema outside and against the System, in a cinema of liberation: the third cinema.

#### FROM THEIR CINEMA TO OURS: THE THIRD CINEMA

The cutting off of the intellectual and artistic sectors from the processes of national liberation - which, among other things, helps us to understand the limitations in which these processes have been unfolding - today tends to disappear in the measure that artists and intellectuals are beginning to discover the impossibility of destroying the enemy without first joining in a battle for their common interests. The artist is beginning to feel the insufficiency of his nonconformism and individual rebellion. And the revolutionary organisations, in turn, are discovering the vacuums that the struggle for power creates in the cultural sphere. The problems of film making, the ideological limitations of a film maker in a neocolonialised country, etc have thus far constituted objective factors in the lack of attention paid to the cinema by the people's organisations. Newspapers and other printed matter, posters and wall propaganda, speeches and other verbal forms of information, enlightenment, and politicisation are still the main means of communication between the organisations and the vanguard layers of the masses. But the new political positions of some film makers and the subsequent appearance of films useful for liberation have permitted certain political vanguards to discover the importance of movies. The importance is to be found in the specific meaning of films as a form of communication and because of their particular characteristics, characteristics that allow them to draw audiences of different origins, many of them people who might not respond favourably to the announcement of a political speech. Films offer an effective pretext for gathering an audience, in addition to the ideological message they contain.

The capacity for synthesis and the penetration of the film image, the possibilities offered by the living document and naked reality, and the power of enlightenment of audiovisual means make the film far more effective than any other tool of communication. It is hardly necessary to point out that those films which achieve an intelligent use of the possibilities of the image, adequate dosage of concepts, language and structure that flow naturally from each theme, and counterpoints of audiovisual narration achieve effective results in the politicisation and mobilisation of cadres and even in work with the masses, where this is possible.

The students who raised barricades on the Avenida 18 de Julio in Montevideo after the showing of *ME GUSTAN LOS ESTUDIANTES* (Mario Handler), those who demonstrated and sang the 'Internationale'



in Merida and Caracas after the showing of LA HORA DE LOS HORNOS, the growing demand for films such as those made by Santiago Alvarez and the Cuban documentary film movement, and the debates and meetings that take place after the underground or semipublic showings of third cinema films are the beginning of a twisting and difficult road being travelled in the consumer societies by the mass organisations (CINEGIORNALI LIBERI, in Italy, Zengakuren documentaries in Japan etc). For the first time in Latin America, organisations are ready and willing to employ films for political-cultural ends: the Chilean Partido Socialista provides its cadres with revolutionary film material, while Argentine revolutionary Peronist and non-Peronist groups are taking an interest in doing likewise. Moreover, OSPAAAL is participating in the production and distribution of films that contribute to the anti-imperialist struggle. The revolutionary organisations are discovering the need for cadres who, among other things, know how to handle a film camera, tape recorders, and projectors in the most effective way possible. The struggle to seize power from the enemy is the meeting ground of the political and artistic vanguards engaged in a common task which is enriching to both.

#### THE PROGRESS AND DEMYSTIFICATION OF TECHNIQUE

Some of the circumstances that delayed the use of films as a revolutionary tool until a short time ago were lack of equipment, technical difficulties, the compulsory specialisation of each phase of work, and high costs. The advances that have taken place within each specialisation; the simplification of movie cameras and tape recorders; improvements in the medium itself, such as rapid film that can be printed in a normal light; automatic light meters; improved audiovisual synchronisation; and the spread of know-how by means of specialised magazines with large circulations and even through nonspecialised media, have helped to demystify film making and divest it of that almost magic aura that made it seem that films were only within the reach of 'artists', 'geniuses' and 'the privileged'. Film making is increasingly within the reach of larger social layers. Chris Marker experimented in France with groups of workers whom he provided with 8mm equipment and some basic instruction in its handling. The goal was to have the worker film his way of looking at the world, just as if he were writing it. This has opened up unheard-of prospects for the cinema; above all, a new conception of film making and the significance of art in our times.

#### THE CINEMA OF DESTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION

Imperialism and capitalism, whether in the consumer society or in the neocolonialised country, veil everything behind a screen of images and appearances. The image of reality is more important than reality itself. It is a world peopled with fantasies and phantoms in which what is hideous is clothed in beauty, while beauty is disguised as the hideous. On the one hand, fantasy, the imaginary bourgeois universe replete



Getino and Solanas: La Hora de los Hornos



with comfort, equilibrium, sweet reason, order, efficiency, and the possibility to 'be someone'. And, on the other, the phantoms, we the lazy, we the indolent and underdeveloped, we who cause disorder. When a neocolonialised person accepts his situation, he becomes a Gungha Din, a traitor at the service of the colonialist, an Uncle Tom, a class and racial renegade, or a fool, the easy-going servant and bumpkin; but, when he refuses to accept his situation of oppression, then he turns into a resentful savage, a cannibal. Those who lose sleep from fear of the hungry, those who comprise the System, see the revolution as a bandit, robber, and rapist; the first battle waged against them is thus not on a political plane, but rather in the police context of law, arrests, etc. The more exploited a man is, the more he is placed on a plane of insignificance. The more he resists, the more he is viewed as a beast. This can be seen in AFRICA ADDIO, made by the fascist Jacopetti; the African savages, killer animals, wallow in abject anarchy once they escape from white protection. Tarzan died, and in his place were born Lumumbas and Lobengulas, Nkomos, and the Madzimbamutos, and this is something that neocolonialism cannot forgive. Fantasy has been replaced by phantoms, and man is turned into an extra who dies so Jacopetti can comfortably film his execution.

I make the revolution; therefore, I exist. This is the starting point for the disappearance of fantasy and phantom to make way for living human beings. The cinema of the revolution is at the same time one of destruction and construction: destruction of the image that neocolonialism has created of itself and of us, and construction of a throbbing, living reality which recaptures truth in any of its expressions.

The restitution of things to their real place and meaning is an eminently subversive fact both in the neocolonial situation and in the consumer societies. In the former, the seeming ambiguity or pseudo-objectivity in newspapers, literature, etc and the relative freedom of the people's organisations to provide their own information cease to exist, giving way to overt restriction, when it is a question of television and radio, the two most important System-controlled or monopolised communications media. The events of May 1968 in France are quite explicit on this point.

In a world where the unreal rules, artistic expression is shoved along the channels of fantasy, fiction, language in code, sign language and messages whispered between the lines. Art is cut off from the concrete facts - which, from the neocolonialist standpoint, are accusatory testimonies - to turn back on itself, strutting about in a world of abstractions and phantoms, where it becomes 'timeless' and history-less. Vietnam can be mentioned, but only far from Vietnam; Latin America can be mentioned, but only far enough away from the continent to be ineffective, in places where it is depoliticised and where it does not lead to action.

The cinema known as documentary, with all the vastness that the concept has today, from educational films to the reconstruction of a fact or a historical event, is perhaps the main basis of revolutionary film making. Every image that documents, bears witness to, refutes or deepens the truth of a situation is something more than a film image or purely artistic fact; it becomes something which the System finds indigestible.

Testimony about a national reality is also an inestimable means of dialogue and knowledge on the world plane. No internationalist form of struggle can be carried out successfully if there is not a mutual exchange of experiences among the people, if the people do not succeed in breaking out of the Balcanisation on the international, continental, and national planes which imperialism is striving to maintain.

### PERFECT CINEMA? PRACTICE AND MISTAKES

The model of the perfect work of art, the fully rounded film structured according to the metrics imposed by bourgeois culture, its theoreticians and critics, has served to inhibit the film maker in the dependent countries, especially when he has attempted to erect similar models in a reality which offered him neither the culture, the techniques, nor the most primary elements for success. The culture of the metropolis kept the age-old secrets that had given life to its models; the transposition of the latter to the neocolonial reality was always a mechanism of alienation, since it was not possible for the artist of the dependent country to absorb, in a few years, the secrets of a culture and society elaborated through the centuries in completely different historical circumstances. The attempt in the sphere of film making to match the pictures of the ruling countries generally ends in failure, given the existence of two disparate historical realities. And such unsuccessful attempts lead to feelings of frustration and inferiority. Both these feelings arise in the first place from the fear of taking risks along completely new roads which are almost a total denial of 'their cinema'. A fear of recognising the particularities and limitations of a dependency situation in order to discover the possibilities inherent in that situation by finding ways of overcoming it which would of necessity be original.

The existence of a revolutionary cinema is inconceivable without the constant and methodical exercise of practice, search, and experimentation. It even means committing the new film maker to take chances on the unknown, to leap into space at times, exposing himself to failure as does the guerrilla who travels along paths that he himself opens up with machete blows. The possibility of discovering and inventing film forms and structures that serve a more profound vision of our reality resides in the ability to place oneself on the outside limits of the familiar, to make one's way amid constant dangers.

Our time is one of hypothesis rather than of thesis, a time of works in



process - unfinished, unordered, violent works made with the camera in one hand and a rock in the other. Such works cannot be assessed according to the traditional theoretical and critical canons. The ideas for our film theory and criticism will come to life through inhibition-removing practice and experimentation. "Knowledge begins with practice. After acquiring theoretical knowledge through practice, it is necessary to return to practice." (Mao Tse-Tung, On Practice). Once he has embarked upon this practice, the revolutionary film maker will have to overcome countless obstacles; he will experience the loneliness of those who aspire to the praise of the System's promotion media only to find that those media are closed to him. As Godard would say, he will cease to be a bicycle champion to become an anonymous bicycle rider, Vietnamese style, submerged in a cruel and prolonged war. But he will also discover that there is a receptive audience that looks upon his work as something of its own, that makes it part of its own existence, and that is ready to defend him in a way that it would never do with any world bicycle champion.

#### CINEMA GROUP AS GUERRILLA GROUP

In this long war, with the camera as our rifle, we do in fact move into a guerrilla activity. This is why the work of a film-guerrilla group is governed by strict disciplinary norms as to both work methods and security. A revolutionary film group is in the same situation as a guerrilla unit: it cannot grow strong without military structures and command concepts. The group exists as a network of complementary responsibilities, as the sum and synthesis of abilities, inasmuch as it operates harmonically with a leadership that centralises planning work and maintains its continuity. Experience shows that it is not easy to maintain the cohesion of a group when it is bombarded by the System and its chain of accomplices frequently disguised as 'progressives', when there are no immediate and spectacular outer incentives and the members must undergo the discomforts and tensions of work that is done underground and distributed clandestinely. Many abandon their responsibilities because they underestimate them or because they measure them with values appropriate to System cinema and not underground cinema. The birth of internal conflicts is a reality present in any group, whether or not it possesses ideological maturity. The lack of awareness of such an inner conflict on the psychological or personality plane, etc, the lack of maturity in dealing with problems of relationships, at times leads to ill feeling and rivalries that in turn cause real clashes going beyond ideological or objective differences. All of this means that a basic condition is an awareness of the problems of interpersonal relationships, leadership and areas of competence. What is needed is to speak clearly, mark off work areas, assign responsibilities and take on the job as a rigorous militancy.

Guerrilla film making proletarianises the film worker and breaks down the intellectual aristocracy that the bourgeoisie grants to its followers.

In a word, it democratises. The film maker's tie with reality makes him more a part of his people. Vanguard layers and even masses participate collectively in the work when they realise that it is the continuity of their daily struggle. LA HORA DE LOS HORNOS shows how a film can be made in hostile circumstances when it has the support and collaboration of militants and cadres from the people.

The revolutionary film maker acts with a radically new vision of the role of the producer, teamwork, tools, details, etc. Above all, he supplies himself at all levels in order to produce his films, he equips himself at all levels, he learns how to handle the manifold techniques of his craft. His most valuable possessions are the tools of his trade, which form part and parcel of his need to communicate. The camera is the inexhaustible expropriator of image-weapons; the projector, a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second.

Each member of the group should be familiar, at least in a general way, with the equipment being used: he must be prepared to replace another in any of the phases of production. The myth of irreplaceable technicians must be exploded.

The whole group must grant great importance to the minor details of the production and the security measures needed to project it. A lack of foresight which in conventional film making would go unnoticed can render virtually useless weeks or months of work. And a failure in guerrilla cinema, just as in the guerrilla struggle itself, can mean the loss of a work or a complete change of plans. "In a guerrilla struggle the concept of failure is present a thousand times over, and victory a myth that only a revolutionary can dream." (Che Guevara, Guerra de guerrillas). Every member of the group must have an ability to take care of details; discipline; speed; and, above all, the willingness to overcome the weaknesses of comfort, old habits, and the whole climate of pseudonormality behind which the warfare of everyday life is hidden. Each film is a different operation, a different job requiring variations in methods in order to confuse or refrain from alerting the enemy, especially as the processing laboratories are still in his hands.

The success of the work depends to a great extent on the group's ability to remain silent, on its permanent wariness, a condition that is difficult to achieve in a situation in which apparently nothing is happening and the film maker has been accustomed to telling all and sundry about everything that he's doing because the bourgeoisie has trained him precisely on such a basis of prestige and promotion. The watchword 'constant vigilance, constant wariness, constant mobility' has profound validity for guerrilla cinema. You have to give the appearance of working on various projects, split up the materials for processing, use go-betweens, mix The Material with other materials, put it together, take it apart, confuse, neutralise, and throw off the track. All of this is necessary as long as the group doesn't have its own processing equip-



ment, no matter how rudimentary, and there remain certain possibilities in the traditional laboratories.

Group-level co-operation between different countries can serve to assure the completion of a film or the execution of certain phases of work that may not be possible in the country of origin. To this should be added the need for a reception centre for film materials to be used by the different groups and the perspective of co-ordination, on a continentwide or even worldwide scale, of the continuity of work in each country: periodic regional or international gatherings to exchange experiences, contributions, joint planning of work, etc.

### PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE THIRD CINEMA

At least in the earliest stages, the revolutionary film maker and the work groups will be the sole producers of their films. They must bear the responsibility of finding ways to obtain the economic means to facilitate the continuity of work. Guerrilla cinema still doesn't have enough experience to set down standards in this area; what experience there is has shown, above all, the ability to make use of the concrete situation in each country. But, regardless of what these situations may be, the preparation of a film cannot be undertaken without a parallel study of its future audience and, consequently, a plan to recover the financial investment. Here, once again, the need arises of closer ties between political and artistic vanguards, since this also serves for the joint study of forms of production, exhibition, and continuity.

A guerrilla film can be aimed only at the distribution mechanisms provided by the revolutionary organisations, including those invented or discovered by the film maker himself. Production, distribution, and economic possibilities for survival must form part of a single strategy. The solution of the problems faced in each of these areas will encourage other people to join in the work of guerrilla film making, which will enlarge its ranks and thus make it less vulnerable.

The distribution of guerrilla films in Latin America is still in swaddling clothes, while System reprisals are already a legalised fact. Suffice it to note in Argentina the raids that have occurred during some showings and the recent film suppression law of a clearly fascist character, in Brazil the ever-increasing restrictions placed upon the most militant comrades of cinema novo, and in Venezuela the banning and license cancellation of LA HORA DE LOS HORNOs; almost all over the continent censorship prevents any possibility of public distribution.

Without revolutionary films and a public that asks for them, any attempt to open up new ways of distribution would be doomed to failure. But both of these already exist in Latin America. The appearance of the films opened up a road which in some countries, such as Argentina, occurs through showings in apartments and houses to audiences of never

more than 25 people; in other countries, such as Chile, films are shown in parishes, universities, or cultural centres (of which there are fewer every day); and, in the case of Uruguay, showings were given in Montevideo's biggest movie theatre to an audience of 2,500 people, who filled the theatre and made every showing an impassioned anti-imperialist event. But the prospects on the continental plane indicate that the possibility for the continuity of a revolutionary cinema rests upon the strengthening of rigorously underground base structures.

Practice implies mistakes and failures.\* Some comrades will let themselves be carried away by the success and impunity with which they present the first showings and will tend to relax security measures, while others will go in the opposite direction of excessive precautions or fearfulness, to such an extent that distribution remains circumscribed, limited to a few groups of friends. Only concrete experience in each country will demonstrate which are the best methods there, which do not always lend themselves to application in other situations.

In some places it will be possible to build infrastructures connected to political, student, worker, and other organisations, while in others it will be more suitable to sell prints to organisations which will take charge of obtaining the funds necessary to pay for each print (the cost of the print plus a small margin). This method, wherever possible, would appear to be the most viable, because it permits the decentralisation of distribution; makes possible a more profound political use of the film; and permits the recovery, through the sale of more prints, of the funds invested in the production. It is true that in many countries the organisations still are not fully aware of the importance of this work, or, if they are, may lack the means to undertake it. In such cases other methods can be used: the delivery of prints to encourage distribution and a box-office cut to the organisers of each showing, etc. The ideal goal to be achieved would be producing and distributing guerrilla films with funds obtained from expropriations of the bourgeoisie - that is, the bourgeoisie would be financing guerrilla cinema with a bit of the surplus value that it gets from the people. But, as long as the goal is no more than a middle or long-range aspiration, the alternatives open to revolutionary cinema to recover production and distribution costs are to some extent similar to those obtained for conventional cinema: every spectator should pay the same amount as he pays to see System cinema. Financing, subsidising, equipping, and supporting revolutionary cinema are political responsibilities for revolutionary organisations and militants. A film can be made, but if its distribution does not allow for the recovery of the costs, it will be difficult or impossible to make a second film.

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\* The raiding of a Buenos Aires union and the arrest of dozens of persons resulting from a bad choice of projection site and the large number of people invited.



The 16mm film circuits in Europe (20 000 exhibition centres in Sweden, 30 000 in France, etc) are not the best example for the neocolonialised countries, but they are nevertheless a complement to be kept in mind for fund raising, especially in a situation in which such circuits can play an important role in publicising the struggles in the Third World, increasingly related as they are to those unfolding in the metropolis countries. A film on the Venezuelan guerrillas will say more to a European public than 20 explanatory pamphlets, and the same is true for us with a film on the May events in France or the Berkeley, USA, student struggle.

A Guerrilla Films International? And why not? Isn't it true that a kind of new international is arising through the Third World struggles; through OSPAAAL and the revolutionary vanguards of the consumer societies?

### THE CINEMA ACT: SPECTATORS AND PROTAGONISTS

A guerrilla cinema, at this stage still within the reach of limited layers of the population, is, nevertheless, the only cinema of the masses possible today, since it is the only one involved with the interests, aspirations and prospects of the vast majority of the people. Every important film produced by a revolutionary cinema will be, explicit or not, a national event of the masses.

The cinema of the masses, which is prevented from reaching beyond the sectors representing the masses, provokes with each showing, as in a revolutionary military incursion, a liberated space, a decolonised territory. The showing can be turned into a kind of political event, which, according to Fanon, could be "a liturgical act, a privileged occasion for human beings to hear and be heard."

Militant cinema must be able to extract the infinity of new possibilities that open up for it from the conditions of proscription imposed by the System. The attempt to overcome neocolonial oppression calls for the invention of forms of communication; it opens up the possibility.

Before and during the making of LA HORA DE LOS HORNOs we tried out various methods for the distribution of revolutionary cinema - the little that we had made up to then. Each showing for militants, middle-level cadres, activists, workers and university students became - without our having set ourselves this aim beforehand - a kind of enlarged cell meeting of which the films were a part but not the most important factor. We thus discovered a new facet of cinema: the participation of people who, until then, were considered spectators. At times, security reasons obliged us to try to dissolve the group of participants as soon as the showing was over, and we realised that the distribution of that kind of film had little meaning if it was not complemented by the participation of the comrades, if a debate was not opened on the themes suggested by the films.

We also discovered that every comrade who attended such showings did so with full awareness that he was infringing the System's laws and exposing his personal security to eventual repression. This person was no longer a spectator; on the contrary, from the moment he decided to attend the showing, from the moment he lined himself up on this side by taking risks and contributing his living experience to the meeting, he became an actor, a more important protagonist than those who appeared in the films. Such a person was seeking other committed people like himself, while he, in turn, became committed to them. The spectator made way for the actor, who sought himself in others.

Outside this space which the films momentarily helped to liberate, there was nothing but solitude, noncommunication, distrust, and fear; within the freed space the situation turned everyone into accomplices of the act that was unfolding. The debates arose spontaneously. As we gained in experience, we incorporated into the showing various elements (a stage production) to reinforce the themes of the films, the climate of the showing, the 'disinhibiting' of the participants, and the dialogue: recorded music or poems, sculpture and paintings, posters, a programme director who chaired the debate and presented the film and the comrades who were speaking, a glass of wine, a few maté's, etc. We realised that we had at hand three very valuable factors:

- 1) The participant comrade, the man-actor-accomplice who responded to the summons;
- 2) The free space where that man expressed his concerns and ideas, became politicised, and started to free himself; and
- 3) The film, important only as a detonator or pretext.

We concluded from these data that a film could be much more effective if it were fully aware of these factors and took on the task of subordinating its own form, structure, language, and propositions to that act and to those actors - to put it another way, if it sought its own liberation in the subordination and insertion in the others, the principal protagonists of life. With the correct utilisation of the time that that group of actor-personages offered us with their diverse histories, the use of the space offered by certain comrades, and of the films themselves, it was necessary to try to transform time, energy, and work into freedom-giving energy. In this way the idea began to grow of structuring what we decided to call the film act, the film action, one of the forms which we believe assumes great importance in affirming the line of a third cinema. A cinema whose first experiment is to be found, perhaps on a rather shaky level, in the second and third parts of LA HORA DE LOS HORNOs ('Acto para la liberación'; above all, starting with 'La resistencia' and 'Violencia y liberación').

"Comrades (we said at the start of 'Acto para la liberación'), this is not just a film showing, nor is it a show; rather, it is, above all, A MEETING - an act of anti-imperialist unity; this is a place only for those who feel identified with this struggle, because here there is no room for spec-



tators or for accomplices of the enemy; here there is room only for the authors and protagonists of the process to which the film attempts to bear witness and to deepen. The film is the pretext for dialogue, for the seeking and finding of wills. It is a report that we place before you for your consideration, to be debated after the showing.

"The conclusions (we said at another point in the second part) to which you may arrive as the real authors and protagonists of this history are important. The experiences and conclusions that we have assembled have a relative worth; they are of use to the extent that they are useful to you, who are the present and future of liberation. But most important of all is the action that may arise from these conclusions, the unity on the basis of the facts. This is why the film stops here; it opens out to you so that you can continue it."

The film act means an open-ended film; it is essentially a way of learning.

"The first step in the process of knowledge is the first contact with the things of the outside world, the stage of sensations (in a film, the living fresco of image and sound). The second step is the synthesising of the data provided by the sensations; their ordering and elaboration; the stage of concepts, judgements, opinions, and deductions (in the film, the announcer, the reportings, the didactics, or the narrator who leads the projection act). And then comes the third stage, that of knowledge. The active role of knowledge is expressed not only in the active leap from sensory to rational knowledge, but, and what is even more important, in the leap from rational knowledge to revolutionary practice. ... The practice of the transformation of the world. ... This, in general terms, is the dialectical materialist theory of the unity of knowledge and action" (Mao Tse-Tung, On Practice). (In the projection of the film act, the participation of the comrades, the action proposals that arise, and the actions themselves that will take place later).

Moreover, each projection of a film act presupposes a different setting, since the space where it takes place, the materials that go to make it up (actors-participants), and the historic time in which it takes place are never the same. This means that the result of each projection act will depend on those who organise it, on those who participate in it, and on the time and place; the possibility of introducing variations, additions, and changes is unlimited. The screening of a film act will always express in one way or another the historical situation in which it takes place; its perspectives are not exhausted in the struggle for power but will instead continue after the taking of power to strengthen the revolution.

## CATEGORIES OF THE THIRD CINEMA

The man of the third cinema, be it guerrilla cinema or a film act, with

the infinite categories that they contain (film letter, film poem, film essay, film pamphlet, film report, etc), above all counters the film industry of a cinema of characters with one of themes, that of individuals with that of masses, that of the author with that of the operative group, one of neocolonial misinformation with one of information, one of escape with one that recaptures the truth, that of passivity with that of aggressions. To an institutionalised cinema, he counterposes a guerrilla cinema; to movies as shows, he opposes a film act or action; to a cinema of destruction, one that is both destructive and constructive; to a cinema made for the old kind of human being, for them, he opposes a cinema fit for a new kind of human being, for what each one of us has the possibility of becoming.

The decolonisation of the film maker and of films will be simultaneous acts to the extent that each contributes to collective decolonisation. The battle begins without, against the enemy who attacks us, but also within, against the ideas and models of the enemy to be found inside each one of us. Destruction and construction. Decolonising action rescues with its practice the purest and most vital impulses. It opposes to the colonisation of minds the revolution of consciousness. The world is scrutinised, unravelled, rediscovered. People are witness to a constant astonishment, a kind of second birth. They recover their early ingenuity, their capacity for adventure; their lethargic capacity for indignation comes to life.

Freeing a forbidden truth means setting free the possibility of indignation and subversion. Our truth, that of the new man who builds himself by getting rid of all the defects that still weigh him down, is a bomb of inexhaustible power and, at the same time, the only real possibility of life. Within this attempt, the revolutionary film maker ventures with his subversive observation, sensibility, imagination, and realisation. The great themes - the history of the country, love and unlove between combatants, the efforts of a people that comes awake - all this is reborn before the lens of the decolonised camera. The film maker feels free for the first time. He discovers that, within the System, nothing fits, while outside of and against the System, everything fits, because everything remains to be done. What appeared yesterday as a preposterous adventure, as we said at the beginning, is posed today as an inescapable need and possibility.

Why films and not some other form of artistic communication? If we choose films as the centre of our propositions and debate, it is because that is our work front and because the birth of a third cinema means, at least for us, the most important revolutionary artistic event of our times.



# ... AND AFTER?

'Towards a third cinema' and LA HORA DE LOS HORNOS represent a third world breakthrough as remarkable as that of Fanon - it has drummed fear into the heart of the western civilised Establishment. While Vietnamese guerrillas break the back of the US military machine, guerrilla camera crews throughout Asia and Latin America are breaking the back of its even more powerful propaganda machine. We, as the allies of this new movement, have to seek both the underlying theoretical premise of its emergence, and its parallels in the West. It's no use crying any more 'We're fucked over by the media!' - our task is to build an alternative.

The present conjuncture in Latin America is characterised by a political and ideological crisis of the ruling oligarchies. The crisis is political because the repressive forces needed to maintain the status quo are tending more and more towards physical coercion, ie towards the open suppression of imminent insurrection. The crisis is ideological because the consciousness of colonisation instilled by centuries of foreign domination, is being shattered by the consciousness of national liberation. The propaganda of US imperialism is becoming more strident, more desperate, as it seeks to hold back giant historical forces behind the Stars and Stripes.

Within the framework of this crisis, the emancipative forces in Latin America have located and exposed new chinks in a seemingly indestructible system. There has been a breakthrough in theory and practice. New weapons are being brought into the anti-imperialist struggle - radio, cinema, pirate printing presses, even videotape. Comrades in Germany have supplied the theoretical basis for this explosion in the use of media - they posit the means of production of the 'consciousness industry' as the principal actors on the ideological stage, rather than

images and sounds. In the same way Marx was able to dispose of the humanist mystification of man as the centre of history - he showed that it was men cloaked in their economic roles (determined by the means of social production) that formed the substance of historical development.

The primary counter-position of this theoretical work is that 'mass communications', as controlled by the ruling oligarchies, are a contradiction in terms. Mass communication means a free flow of information between the point of transmission and the point of reception - as Enzensburger points out ('Constituents for a Theory of the Media', New Left Review No.64), transistor radios are essentially two-way systems. It is only the prevailing interests that pervert this dual essence, turning communication (dialogue) into propaganda (monologue). In fact these interests seek to destroy mass consciousness, by isolating and colonising individuals.

The second counter-position is that media as currently deployed do not represent a vast, all-powerful conspiracy - they are subject to the same contradictions as capitalism itself. Specifically, the mobilising power of the media, their dependence on sensation and violence, is directly incompatible with the 'peace'-keeping efforts of the State and its military arms. The US is not only exporting peanut butter and cranberry pie in its ideological war on Latin America - it is also forced to export the Vietnam war, campus riots, ghetto explosions and other afflictions.

This is the theory underlining Solanas' strategy for a 'guerrilla cinema'. This strategy calls for a two-pronged attack on the prevailing system of communications - at the point of production, and at the point of distribution.

## OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Guerrilla cinema units expropriate the means of production from the ruling interests - by grabbing their own cameras, tape recorders, projectors and even developing/printing apparatus, they never have to enter the cycle of production established by the System. This cuts the dangers of surveillance (censorship), and removes the economic sanctions of high rental prices. 'Camera-running' has become the stock-in-trade of these guerrilla units.

In ideological terms, the point of production is the open end of a one-way system of communication - it is in front of the camera that the ideological forces fight for dominance in the final image (quite apart from the structure imposed on this image by the lens apparatus and chemical process of development). It is the proletarian world view of the guerrilla film maker, coupled with a comprehension of his means of production, that enables him to stamp his films with this same proletarian view, and thus make them irrecoverable by the class enemy.



Solanas is a little vague here in his discussion of the role of the third world intellectual: he doesn't openly contrast the obligations of the intellectuals with their privileges. The intellectual has either a proletarian world view, or he wittingly/unwittingly subscribes to the prevailing ideology, and hence upholds the status quo. This stake in the status quo (especially for western intellectuals) is reflected in numerous ways - in the fear of violence, in the fear of unemployment (blacklisted journalists, for example), and ultimately in the fear of the masses themselves - the fear of losing one's voice in the babble of mass insurrection, of losing the authority that theory bestows, and practice destroys. Thus Solanas is open to criticism when he mentions the two kinds of art - theirs and ours. He is still talking in the past tense, as an artist, and not as a revolutionary who is willing to reject all art if the struggle demands it.

### OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF DISTRIBUTION

The guerrilla unit either exchanges prints of its films with organisations it can trust, or it screens the films themselves in what Solanas calls 'cinema-acts'. By this means it avoids once again the enemy's cycle of distribution (and the economic exploitation and politically debilitating promotion that this implies), and is able to control the conditions of the screening. On the pretext of a film showing, militants and potential militants are assembled together on their own home ground - such a situation can be explosive.

Again in ideological terms, the 'cinema act' achieves the revolutionary aim of opening up the other end of a previously one-way system of communication, making it two-way. In the cinema act, it is not only the film that speaks - in fact, the film is little more than a trigger for discussion.

Thus the militant film maker, who controls his own means of production and distribution, has placed these in the hands of the people. With them he manufactures images and sounds which are valid reflections of the people, of their struggle and hopes. The practice of militant cinema has effectively destroyed the notions of inspiration, of artistic integrity etc (notions that were destroyed theoretically by Benjamin over forty years ago) by reversing the film maker's frame of reference - he is not sacrificing his talents to the people; in fact, it is the people (in both their essence and appearance) who constitute his films. The subjectivity of the artist has been destroyed by the objectivity of a lens.

### WESTERN PARALLELS

Solanas and the third world have pioneered the practice of militant cinema, but revolutionaries in the west have been quick to follow on. There are now groups in the US, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and

Britain. It is their job to mediate points of struggle to other sectors of the movement - they are independent of and in opposition to the established media networks. Their cinetracts cover street fighting, marches, industrial strikes, student strikes, rent strikes, as well as the undistorted human face of emancipative struggle. Their screenings are classical 'cinema-acts' - in occupied colleges, factory canteens, street corners. (To reach the working class, they are forced to work in close co-operation with either the CP or trade unions (whichever is the stronger) - these are their legitimate means of support. But before overcoming the conservative outlooks of these bodies, they are forced to rely on work within the film industry, and the support of politically sympathetic groups on the left. Perhaps the desperate financial state of Britain's Cinema Action should be signalled in this context).

So much for the general description of militant cinema, but what of Solanas' personal achievement? Obviously he is in danger of being swallowed by the patronage of western intellectuals - as happened to his unfortunate predecessor, Glauber Rocha. LA HORA DE LOS HORNOS was treated in Paris with all the tenderness given a precious orchid in a hot house. It was displayed for the gratification of the discriminating in a chic Parisian film studio, and Solanas' vigorous campaign of political promotion was limited, as far as I know, to film magazines. When first shown, the film was the sensation of the Pesaro Festival, one of the more enlightened of the institutions used to recuperate cultural deviations and defuse them of subversive political qualities.

A favourite technique of apologist critics is to revert to an analysis of the images and sounds, rather than of the means of production. Thus an imposing edifice of implicit political effectiveness can be built (in terms of signifiers) as well as the explicit statements of political signifieds. Another technique is to seize on third world films and transmute them into art objects, ie into depoliticised articles of consumption. The imposed form of entertainment changes the content of the film - hence the equivocal character of discussing Solanas in this film magazine.

Lenin's dictum that 'we must dream' is behind Solanas' ecstatic vision of the 'new man', but certainly not behind his particular species of militant cinema. The manufacture of political metaphors has fallen into the hands of the 'artists' - film makers with urgent political priorities are more concerned with organisation, than edification. This is not to deny the role of the Glauber Rocha's of this world - it is merely to define their sphere of influence.

The final call. Obviously militant cinema is a contradiction in media - it is best suited to video. Video is fast, cheap, and easily distributed - at the moment the means of production is only financially prohibitive, not technically. Perhaps Solanas' message is best translated as: 'Forward to Guerrilla Video International!'

JOHN MATTHEWS



# ON COLONIAL CINEMA

HALA  
SALMANE

The following is a brief look at colonial cinema, by which I mean Western cinema dealing with the 'natives' before the emergence of the Third World countries. Cinema at this time was roughly a reflection of the balance of power in the world. Since Third World countries could not speak for themselves, Europeans monopolised the presentation of these peoples to themselves. Concerned to maintain their domination, the colonising countries used cinema, as a reflection of their dominant ideology, to assert it.

Colonial cinema therefore had a dual role: 1) To distort the image of colonised people in order to justify to Western public opinion the policy of colonisation; the 'natives' had therefore to be portrayed as sub-human; 2) To convince the 'natives' that their colonial 'mother' protected them from their own savagery and from the unhappiness which was their essential state of mind.

As far as Algeria is concerned, one can divide colonial cinema into two periods:

## 1. From 1897 to 1945

Between 1897 and 1945, the whole of the Maghreb (North Africa) was seen by colonial cinema as a monolithic bloc with no distinction between Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. This cinema reinforced the image of the area represented by tourist posters with their camels, palm trees and belly dancers. In 1897, Méliès made Le Musulman rigolo (The comic Moslem), where the Arab appears as a strange creature for the amusement of European audiences; later he made Ali Barbouyou

in the same vein. In 1905, Mesguish, a French director born in North Africa, directed Ali bouff' a l'huile (Ali swallows fat). But Mesguish was one of the only directors to film newsreel material, such as Prière de Muezzin and Marché arabe, and he seems to have been more concerned with reality than other directors of colonial cinema.

This latter was all mystification, representing the Maghreb as a mythical area without either a historical or a social identity: a sunny land ripe for adventure where the Arabs are happy monkeys praising Allah for sending them the civilising influence of French colonialism. The question of Algerian nationalism is of course never touched upon, since the colonists are there by divine right. Arabs frequently pull knives on the virtuous Europeans, but only to steal from them.

In the 1920s and 1930s film producers pandered to the French public's fondness for seeing brawls and fights to the death with the 'evil Arabs'. Audiences were provided with a rationalisation for the oppressive machinery of colonialism, and French cinema created and nourished an ignorance of and contempt for Arabs as well as a mythology of aggression. Le sang d'Allah, made in 1922 by Georges Bourgeois, is a typical example.

On average, fifteen films a year were shot in North Africa during this period. This did not mean, of course, that there was any attempt to create a film industry there, since completion work on the films was done in Europe. Algeria, like the rest of the Maghreb, remained a location for exotic adventures, like Duvivier's Pépé le Moko or Feyder's Le grand jeu. It is interesting to note that censorship intervened to prevent any suggestion of Arab nationalism. For example, the sentence 'The people of the Rif (countryside) defend their land' was cut from Le grand jeu, though it had almost certainly no political significance in the context of the film.

## 2. From 1945 to 1954

The political movement in Algeria grew rapidly, particularly after the massacre of 8 May 1945. Film-makers shooting in Algeria, such



as Serge de Poligny (Le soif des hommes), were advised by the colonial authorities to avoid filming 'pillaging Arabs and armed settlers'. When things seemed quieter, films like René Clair's Belles de nuit could be made. Clair's film did not avoid the usual clichés about the sexual sadism of the Arabs, and of course it was in no way concerned with the social or economic problems of the Maghreb. More significantly, a few months before the start of the Algerian revolution in 1954 France was represented at the Cannes festival by Robert Siodmak's racist re-make of Le grand jeu, which was characterised by the usual clichés about courageous legionaries and cowardly Arabs. The film was praised by the critics, only a few - like Georges Sadoul - pointing out that its basic falsification was dangerously offensive at a time when the anti-colonialist forces were mustering.

There were some attempts to get closer to the North African reality. In 1947, for instance, André Zwoboda made La septième porte, adapted from a Moroccan legend. The film was made in two versions: French, with a commentary by Jean Cocteau, and an Arab version featuring the actress Keltoum, later to appear in Lakhdar Hamina's Vent des Aurès. But as an ethnographic view of North Africa, the film is like others of its kind, politically dubious in the sense that it avoids any hint of political realities.

Two years after the outbreak of the Algerian war, Maurice Bataille and Claude Veillot had this to say in their book Les caméras sous le soleil: 'The net result of 35 years of film in North Africa is not just meagre, it is skeletal. But looking back may not be a useless exercise; the future film-makers of North Africa will be able to draw lessons from the past...' Which is what they have done.

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## The Algerian Revolution in French and World Cinema

### 1. French Cinema

One might have thought that French cinema would go through a period of self-questioning after the failure of colonial cinema to show anything of the reality of the Maghreb and particularly after the

Algerians had demonstrated, through armed struggle, their identity as a nation. In fact, there were no more than a few discreet hints about the situation of French cinema in relation to what was happening in Algeria. As Roger Tailleux wrote in 1962 in Positif, commenting on a scene in Agnès Varda's Cléo de 5 à 7 which features a radio broadcast about the Algerian war: 'Poor French cinema, poor little castrated cinema where the screening in the silence of a dark room of a simple radio broadcast seems to be uniquely daring, and where we feel surprised on hearing it to fear the presence, in the dark, of a possible censor.'

Indeed, one would be hard put to find a French film which deals on any but a superficial level with the origins and nature of the war or the Algerian cause. French film-makers looked at the effects of the war on aspects of the daily life of the French; only very rarely did they stand on the side of the Algerians. In Jacques Rozier's Adieu Philippine or Varda's Cléo or Resnais' Muriel the war in Algeria is represented as an awkward interruption in the love lives of French youth. Frequently the hero is obliged to leave his girl because of conscription, as in Demy's Parapluies de Cherbourg. Deserters from the army, as in Alain Cavalier's L'insoumis or Godard's Petit soldat, act from personal and not political motives. The French critic Marcel Martin has listed some 70 films which make reference to the war, of which only a very few give clear support to the Algerians. All of them, not coincidentally, from the underground cinema.

How explain this failure, particularly in view of the well established left-wing traditions among French intellectuals? Why did French film-makers produce nothing on the Algerian war to compare with such American critiques of the Vietnam war as Emile de Antonio's In the Year of the Pigs, or even with the mainly French Loin du Vietnam?

Most film-makers, asked about their silence, have answered that they had screenplays ready to film. And if none of these films were actually made, it was because of the extremely severe censorship in France during the Algerian war. Alain Resnais once said: 'Provided



you don't say anything about the police, judges, doctors, priests, Ministers or the army, and provided you avoid referring to the political situation, you can say anything you like in France, or nearly anything.' Producers were naturally unwilling to finance films which risked being banned. It was not until 1974 that the French public were given the first full-blooded commercial film about the Algerian war, Yves Boisset's R.A.S., which features political deserters, the destruction of villages, Algerian women raped by French soldiers, etc. The commercial success of this film was evidence of the French public's continuing appetite for the 'dirty war'.

It must be recognised, however, that some French film-makers acknowledged that the war affected them not only as committed anti-colonialists but also as artists. The war created in France a climate of self-censorship, induced by the official censorship, which considerably limited freedom of thought. Responding to criticism of his L'année dernière à Marienbad, Alain Resnais said, 'You can't make a film in France without referring to the war in Algeria. At any rate, I wonder whether the claustrophobia of Marienbad is not the result of the contradictions of this endless war.' So the only possibility for film-makers honestly to come to terms with the war was to make underground political films. The Jean Vigo Group made 58/2B, a film which encourages military insubordination. The Vérité-Liberté Group and the Maurice Audin Committee produced Octobre à Paris, about the repression of anti-colonialist demonstrations by Algerians in Paris, who talk in the film about the torture and humiliation they suffered at the hands of the French police. This film also shows a demonstration by French people at Charonne, and seems animated by an internationalist spirit which urges French and Algerian to unite in the struggle against colonialism.

Yann Le Masson went even further with J'ai huit ans, which used interviews with young refugees as a commentary on drawings done by Algerian children. René Vautier, who later directed La folle de Toujane, went to the Tunisian frontier to shoot a documentary on Sakiët Sidi Youssef, a village bombed by the French airforce in

retaliation for Tunisia's support for Algerian guerrillas.

Besides making documentaries on the war, Vautier was largely responsible for the foundation of Algerian cinema in that he trained members of the NLF to use film. He is still highly respected in Algeria.

Chris Marker's Le joli Mai, a documentary about the Algerian war as seen from France, is one of the most successful attempts, both politically and artistically, to come to terms with the war. The film shows the development of the anti-colonialist movement in France; but not one of the passers-by interviewed in the film mentions the end of the Algerian war as the most important event of the month in which the film was shot. People evidently wanted to forget.

Also of interest is Chronique d'un été, directed by the anthropologist Jean Rouch and the sociologist Edgar Morin, who managed to sidestep censorship by asking French people whether they were happy. The answers they got revealed a general desire that this absurd war should be stopped.

## 2. World Cinema

In the Arab world, the Egyptian director Youssef Chahine (who directed The Sparrow) made Djamila l'Algérienne, about Algerian women tortured by the French. The film had a great impact in the Arab countries where it was shown.

Very few films were made in the rest of the world on the Algerian war. The Soviet Union made a documentary on the Moroccan frontier. China made a film called Intrepid Algeria. A Bulgarian film, The Feast of Hope, showed the extraordinary enthusiasm of the five days following Algerian independence. In East Germany, Karl Gass directed a film which translates as Allons enfants pour l'Algérie, a pun on the opening line of the French national anthem, and which attacks the West German mercenaries who fought with the French. Erich Korbsschmitt, another East German, made the reputedly melodramatic six-hour film Escape to Hell. I am not aware of any British film on the war.



# CINEMA IN AFRICA

A SURVEY HANS KAMPHAUSEN

Special thanks for editorial work and otherwise generous assistance in the preparation for publication of this article to Gordon Hitchens, former editor of *Film Comment* and now a free-lance writer and editor. He recently guest-edited a special issue for *Film Culture* on Hollywood Blacklisting and his interview with Joris Ivens appeared in that magazine's Spring '72 number. *Film Culture's* next issue, also guest-edited by Hitchens, will focus on Nazi cinema and will feature his interview with Leni Riefenstahl.

Hannes Kamphausen is a Counsellor of the German Africa Society, which distributes African films non-theatrically within Germany, and on occasion sponsors the production of special African shorts. He is also editor of the German-language *Afrika Heute* (*Africa Today*), a bi-monthly of political and cultural thought on Africa. Dr. Kamphausen has lived and travelled widely in Africa and is presently concluding a special study on the culture and history of the Malagasi Republic—the former French colony of Madagascar.

## THE CINEMA AND AFRICA

Cinema in Africa is almost as old as the invention of cinema. In 1896, one of the first projectors of the "theatrograph," stolen from the London Alhambra Palace, found its way to South Africa, thus introducing the cinema to the African continent. Cinemas

in South Africa are still called "bioscops," after the "Warwick bioscop" projectors widely used at the turn of the century.<sup>1</sup> In West Africa, the first films were shown in 1905, in Dakar.

It was from this beginning that films were produced in Africa. Felix Mesguich from Algiers, one of the camera operators for the Lumière brothers, made some remarkable films in 1905 such as *THE PRAYER OF THE MUEZZIN*, *THE STREET BAB-AZOUN* and *DISCHARGING AT THE PORT*. In 1913, Delagrane, owner of the Lagrane "cinema" in Alexandria, made a short called *IN THE STREETS OF ALEXANDRIA* in order to draw the public into his establishment; his colleague from the Club El Masri in Cairo showed a film in 1915 in which he smoked his pipe while receiving his clients.

But this good start with realistic documentaries was not followed up, neither by Africans nor by Europeans. In the opinion of Guy Hennebelle, one of the French authorities on African cinema, this was due to the impossibility for Europeans to give a realistic picture of conditions in Africa: that would

<sup>1</sup> Jean Rouch: "Situation et tendances du cinéma en Afrique" in *Films ethnographiques sur l'Afrique Noire*. UNESCO, 1967, S.374





have meant also showing the dark sides of colonialism.<sup>2</sup>

Instead, for the next half century, and to this day, the African scene is used as an exotic backdrop for the valiant deeds of the white man, bringing civilization, peace and progress to the savage backlands. Whether it is the famous white explorer, the tradesman, administrator, officer, missionary or Tarzan, they all carry the White Man's Burden through the wild and dangerous African forest, fighting cannibals and heathens, witch-doctors, animals, diseases, ignorance, stupidity and backwardness. All the colonial clichés are assembled, just as in the colonial literature of the period. The African is always depicted as an inferior being; if he is not a strange unpredictable brute, he is an obedient, ever good-humored servant, a parallel to the Uncle Tom figure of American movies. It is the time of the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, of *TRADER HORN* and of *SANDERS OF THE RIVER*, one of the first sound movies made in Africa, featuring Paul Robeson. [Note: actually, the Robeson scenes were shot in London studios, in obviously fake sets, but docu-

mentary footage shot in Africa was used for background and for some interiors.—G.H.] This film, based on a novel by Edgar Wallace, was rather successful in Africa, in spite of its glorification of colonialism, possibly due to the fact that for the first time a black man was playing the leading role. But *SANDERS OF THE RIVER* was apparently not greeted with enthusiasm everywhere in Africa; according to Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, it was resented in Nigeria, where the story was set, and led to a campaign against Paul Robeson.<sup>3</sup>

The reign of films of this type is by no means over, even if they have had to become more subtle. This change might be due to the growing number of documentary films during the later '30s, and particularly during the '40s and '50s, that tried to trace the originality of African cultures.

If these introductory remarks have insisted in broad terms upon the nature of relations between Africans and whites, and of the African personality as depicted in Western films, it is to call attention to what modern African film-makers are up to. Preju-

<sup>2</sup> Guy Hennebelle, in *Afrique-Asie*, No. 50, 1971, S.43

<sup>3</sup> Frank Aig I Moukhuede: "Ten Years of African Cinema" in *Présence Africaine*, special number, 1971, p. 331



dices that have been formed or strengthened by films of this kind are not easily overcome. The normal non-African spectator abroad has little means to discover the truth or untruth of what he is shown about Africa. He eats what he is served.

By no means the last service that modern African feature films will render to the white public is to correct the often falsified picture of Africa that it is used to. Of course, this does not mean to say that it is a primary concern of the African film-maker to fight European and American prejudices. The new African film producers show more and more clearly that they intend to address themselves to an African public. But by tackling the problems at home, by dealing with genuinely African themes, they will enrich cultural human heritage as a whole.

The problem—for which public, for which market to produce?—is not an easy one. It is quite clear that the existing cinematic structures in Africa were not installed to favor the distribution of African films. In fact, these structures, inherited from pre-independence days, make it very difficult for African cinema to develop, as shall be discussed in detail later. For the moment, Africa is but a small side-market for international film production (with the exception of Egypt). Until now, Africa has had very little say on what is shown on its screens, at least as far as feature films in theatres are concerned. Commercial decisions are made by expatriates, in and outside of Africa. Distribution and theatre management are to a greater extent in non-African hands. In most African countries there are quasi-monopolies of two or three big companies imposing their program selections. Needless to say, they are primarily concerned with profit and care little about the quality of the films shown and their possibly negative effects upon the African spectator. A glance at the situation of the cinema in Africa shows that in many ways it is a reflection of the overall situation: the dependence of African states, in many fields of activity, upon their former European masters.

"Africa is a cinematographic desert." This was 1961, a statement by Georges Sadoul, French historian of the cinema. He explained that, based upon UNESCO statistics from the period 1948-52, every European in British East Africa went to the cinema about forty times per annum, while the overall African population of the region had the opportunity to see a film every forty or fifty years—a period longer than their average life-expectancy!<sup>4</sup> Of course, things have changed a bit since then, but a glance at Appendix I will show that there are still only 11,200 cinema seats for almost 10 million Ugandans; 17,000 for over 10 million Kenyans; 25,000 for over 13 million Tanzanians. Still desert-like! And Africans love to see films, just as anyone anywhere in the world.

It is true that the overall number of available theatre seats does not give a 100% accurate picture. In Nigeria, for example, more than ten times the spectators patronizing the nearly 120 theatres are

reached by Federal and State Government mobile cinema-units.<sup>5</sup> Naturally, the programs differ, but in any case people are reached with national or international information, thus extending their field of knowledge and education.

It is the latter field to which Anglophone (English-speaking) Africa seems to have given priority as far as film production is concerned. It is noticeable that—besides newsreels, touristic, "handshake" and other national propaganda films found everywhere in Africa—the former British territories tend to concentrate on educational documentaries, while feature films seem to be mostly a privilege of some former French colonies. It is not easy to say why this is so. To a certain extent one might explain it by an insistence on more practical and pragmatic attitudes inherited from the former British authority, and on more theoretical and aesthetic attitudes from the former French colonialist. It could also be stated that the French have systematically encouraged and subsidized fictional films, while the British have not done so. But it is quite difficult to generalize, as a closer look at the achievements of Francophone (French-speaking) Africa in the field of feature films demonstrates. Why do countries like Niger or Mauritania boast important contributions to the young African cinema and the Cameroons, for example, do not?

These are questions wide open to speculation. As the number of film-makers in these African countries is still very limited, we might have to leave the explanation to individual initiative and accidental situations. How, for example, would film-making in Niger have developed without Jean Rouch and other French *cinéastes* being in the region? How to classify the dynamic Med Hondo from Mauritania, who financed and produced his brilliant *SOLEIL O* all by himself? The range of themes, styles, temperaments and formations among the different artists on the lively African film scene underlines the importance of taking idiosyncrasies into consideration. Before going further with more general questions, let us, therefore, briefly survey African films and their directors.

### THEMES OF AFRICAN FEATURE FILMS

Just as in African writing, the subject of African films is Africa and the Africans, facing the problems of the traditional and modern ways of life, at home and abroad. As most African *cinéastes* have learned their skills abroad, it is not surprising that some of the first films deal with the situation of African emigrants, students and workers abroad. Long before independence, in 1952, Paulin Vieyra, the first African film-maker to get a diploma from the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques (IDHEC) in Paris, founded the first African film group. Their one and only film, *AFRIQUE SUR SEINE* (AFRICA ON THE SEINE) was only to be finished ten years later, but nevertheless it seems to be the first really African fiction film. With discreet irony, it deals with the bitterness of emigration, deracination, alienation—themes to stay with the African film. Désiré Touré

<sup>4</sup> Georges Sadoul, in *La Vie Africaine*, June 15, 1961, p. 25

<sup>5</sup> following Aig I Moukhuède (figures disagree with figures in Appendix I)



from the Ivory Coast wittily demonstrates these themes in his two medium-length films, *CONCERTO POUR UN EXIL* (*CONCERTO FOR AN EXILE*) and *A NOUS DEUX, FRANCE* (*TAKE CARE, FRANCE*)—which is also known as *FEMME NOIRE FEMME NUE* (*BLACK WOMAN, NAKED WOMAN*), a title selected by the distributor, assented to by the director. This film depicts life in student and other African immigrant circles on the banks of the Seine.

As far as the theme of immigrant labor is concerned, it plays a larger role in North African films like *MEKHTOUB?* by Ali Ghalem, and *ETOILE AUX DENTS* (*STAR WITH TEETH*) by Derri Berkani, both from Algeria. In a way, it is also the theme of *LA NOIRE DE...* (*BLACK GIRL*), the first long feature film from sub-Saharan Africa, by Ousmane Sembene from Senegal. The film was awarded several prizes, including the first prize at the First Festival of Negro Arts, in 1966 in Dakar. In *LA NOIRE DE...* the coldness and inhumanity of her white surroundings at Nice lead to the isolation and suicide of a Senegalese girl taken to France as a housemaid.

Identity is another theme of African cinema. It is less the difficulty of human contact between white and non-white than the awkward position of the African between two different cultures with very different values. This is the main topic of a number of films. After a long absence from home, the hero of *ET LA NEIGE N'ETAIT PLUS* (*AND THERE WAS NO MORE SNOW*) by Babacar Samb from Senegal, asks himself whether his stay in Europe did not spoil him for life in Africa. Torn and undecided, the African intellectual has great difficulties in discovering his true identity.

At the same time, the African has a great longing to overcome his interior imbalance. The returnees in *SARZAN*, by Senegalese Momar Thiam, and in *CABASCABO*, by Oumarou Ganda from Niger, are not students but soldiers who had fought for the French in Indochina. The title hero "Sarzan"—a corruption of the French *sergent* (sergeant)—imbued with the French civilizing mission, tries by all means to change the traditional ways of his village and ends up a lunatic. *CABASCABO* is a hero to his friends and the girls so long as he has money. Once broke, he is left alone. Finally, he finds his way back to the countryside, an axe over his shoulder. He has found a solution. In *LE RETOUR DE L'AVENTURIER* (*RETURN OF THE ADVENTURER*) by Moustapha Alassane from Niger, Jimmy comes back from Europe with a bagful of cowboy implements for his friends. They set up a band to steal horses and molest the villagers but the imported Wild West game soon leads to bloodshed and death. The outside influence is seen as a danger to traditional life which, on the other hand, does not offer the young generation the fulfillment of longings that are aroused, for example, by cowboy movies.

The weight of traditional ways of life, particularly on the younger generation, is felt in many films. In *WECHMA*, by Hamid Benani from Morocco, it is the traditional way of education, with its insistence on obedience, that finally turns the adopted orphan into a delinquent. The film is an attack, done in a smooth



LA NOIRE DE...

and silent way, on all kinds of rigid traditional authority. In *LE WAZOU POLYGAME*, by Oumarou Ganda from Niger, the custom of polygamy leads to a tragic end. *KARIM*, by Momar Thiam from Senegal, also denounces the faults and abuses of traditional life as well as the degradation due to "modernism."

The two films by the Senegalese Mahama Johnson Traoré—*DIANKHA-BI* (*THE YOUNG GIRL*) and *DIEGUE-BI* (*THE WOMAN*)—tend to be more critical of the deteriorating effects of modern ways of behavior than of traditional ones. *MANDABI* (*THE MONEY ORDER*), the first full-length African film in color, by Ousmane Sembene of Senegal, is another attack—like his short *BOROM SARRET*—on the exploitation of analphabets, or illiterates, living the traditional ways. This exploitation is done by smart "been tos"—Africans who, having "been to" European schools, have come home corrupt and cynical.

There is no lack of shorter films depicting aspects of traditional life, films that come near to being ethnographic documentaries. Examples are *AOURE* (*WEDDING*) by Moustapha Alassane and *KAKA-YO* by the Camera-Club of Brazzaville. Also, the long final sequence of *KODOU*, by Babacar Samb of





KODOU

Senegal, pictures the sacrifice of a goat, dances and other ceremonies as traditional means to heal the mentally sick girl, Kodou. This full-length film is of special interest because it is a rigorously African film addressing itself to an African public and little concerned with European viewing habits. KODOU is the story of a young girl who wants to have her lips pierced in the traditional way, but who is not prepared for it. She cannot bear the painful operation and so runs away, bringing shame to herself and her family. Rejected by her friends, she undergoes a traumatic shock and becomes dangerous to herself; she has to be bound to a tree in her family compound. Modern psychotherapeutic treatment does not help her, and so the family returns to traditional ways of curing her. Her sickness is cultural or psychological, rather than physical. The message of KODOU is that the deeper African problems cannot be cured by turning to European ways. Original solutions are to be found that do not disregard tradition. On the other hand, Semb is far from giving an over-harmonious picture of traditional life.

In a different way, traditional reactions play a part in EMITAI, the latest film by Ousmane Sembene. This "master of African neo-realism"—always in skin-to-skin touch with the population of the simpler quarters of his home town, Dakar—has always given convincing insights into the lives and problems of his heroes, touching at the same time on social flaws like corruption, exploitation and ill-treatment of the underdog. But EMITAI (the name of the Diola god of thunder) has quite different aims. It shows the resistance of villagers in the Casamance (in southern

Senegal) against French orders to transmit their rice provisions during World War II. Quite clearly, Sembene is on his way to decolonizing African history and is trying to awaken pride in Africa's own past. It is with this idea in mind that Sembene has been planning for quite some time to make a film on Samory, the Guinean leader who gave the French invader a tough time during the early years of colonization.

Especially noteworthy in EMITAI is the portrayal of women, who are seen as less submissive and more valiant than the men. Indeed, it is one of Sembene's cherished ideas that African renovation will depend to a large extent on African women.

But Sembene's women are not only heroines and defenders of tradition and pride, they also remain real women, which cannot always be said about the heroic women appearing in many Algerian films. Guy Hennebelle has pointed out that the Arab-African film-maker has greater difficulty than the black African in presenting women naturally.<sup>6</sup> In Algerian films women most often appear merely as fighters, with the exception of the short films ELLES (WOMEN) by Lalle and L'OBSTACLE (THE OBSTACLE) by Bouamari, which tackle the problems of women's emancipation.

Algeria, of course, is the producer par excellence of anti-colonialist films. Most of Algeria's 15 full-length films to date concern the national war of liberation. This is quite understandable if one

<sup>6</sup> Guy Hennebelle, in *Afrika heute*, 19/20 Filmbeilage, p.5



considers that it was the struggle for liberation from 1954-62 that gave birth to Algerian film-making. Cinema in Algeria is considered an important weapon in the search for national identity and liberty. The struggle for liberation is not always confined to one's own nation, e.g. *L'AUBE DES DAMNES* (THE DAWN OF THE DAMNED) by Ahmed Rachedi, a documentary compilation of footage from many nations involved in revolutionary struggle—from Angola to Algeria to Vietnam—that condemns colonial and imperialist brutality.<sup>7</sup> But the majority of films made in Algeria—like *LA NUIT A PEUR DU SOLEIL* (THE NIGHT IS AFRAID OF THE SUN) by Mustapha Badie; *HISTOIRES DE LA REVOLUTION* (STORIES OF THE REVOLUTION) by Bedjaoui, Mazif and Laradji; *L'ENFER A DIX ANS* (TEN YEAR HELL), a compilation film by Bendeddouch, Bougermouh, Mazif, Laskri and Akika; or the well-known *VENT DES AURES* (WIND FROM AURES) by Lakhdar-Hamina; and *HASSAN TERRO* by the same director—show different aspects of Algeria's struggle for national independence.

But there is a certain danger when revolution takes on the dimensions of a myth. *L'OPIUM ET LA BATON* (OPIUM AND WHIPS), for instance, the latest film by Ahmed Rachedi for the Office National pour le Commerce et l'Industrie Cinématographique, is a Hollywood-style super-production which shows—rather unconvincingly—Algerian guerrillas as heroic supermen. Young Algerian film-makers particularly are not very happy with this development and certainly agree with the warning of the well-known Algerian author, Mostefa Lacheraf: "Today, folklore and abusive exploitation of warrior heroism are the nourishing breasts of certain Maghreb countries. This vein perpetuates anachronistic nationalism and keeps people off the new realities."<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, there are many urgent post-independence problems waiting to be tackled. One of them, unemployment, is the subject of *LA GRANDE DETOUR*, a medium-length film by 28 year-old Ahmed Bedjaoui. The scandalous situation of Maghreb emigrants in France has been treated by Ali Ghalem's *MEKHTOUB?* and Derri Berkani's *POULU LE MAGNIFIQUE*. There is increasing hope that the subject matter of Algerian films, with the arrival of more and more young film-makers, will not overlook the questions of the present in continually appraising the past.

In Tunisia, Omar Khelifi concentrates on illustrating his country's way to independence in his films *L'AUBE* (THE DAWN), *FELLAGAS* and *THE REBEL*, while in Morocco this theme has not yet been treated. In sub-Saharan Africa, Sekoumar Barry from Guinea, in his *ET VINT LA LIBERTE* (AND THEN CAME LIBERTY), shows the steps to Guinean independence.

As far as African countries still under white rule are concerned, two films have been completed by Sarah Maldoror, wife of the Angolan poet Mario

d'Andrade. *MONONGAMBEE* (CRY OF REVOLT), based on a novelette by Luandino Vieira from Angola, shows the sufferings of an African imprisoned by the Portuguese, as well as the impossibility of understanding between colonized and colonizer. *DES FUSILS POUR BANTA* (GUNS FOR BANTA) is a full-length film on the liberation movement, the P.A.I.G.C., in Guinea Bissau. Sarah Maldoror has also recently started production on *DOMINGOS XAVIER*, a film on the awakening of political consciousness amongst inhabitants of the Portuguese colony of Angola.

*VUKANI/AWAKE* by South African film-maker (in exile, of course) Lionel Ngakane is a short documentary on the tragic situation of the black people of South Africa suffering under the cruelties of Apartheid. Ngakane is now preparing a film about Chief Albert Luthuli, the president of the African National Congress of South Africa and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Ngakane, by the way, has shown that he is also a director of fiction films; his *JEMIMA AND JOHNNY* deals with race relations in a London suburb.

Another film on Apartheid made by black South Africans is *PHELA-NDABA* (END OF THE DIALOGUE), footage for which had to be smuggled out of the Union and assembled in London. Black South Africans, of course, are not allowed to make political films in their home country.

Many of the urgent problems of today's Africa have not yet been dealt with in film. Among these are the abuses of power by the ruling elites; the difficult relations between elites and the population; corruption; brain-drain; rural exodus; tribalism; the maintenance of pre-independence relationships and value systems; enrichment of the few and poverty of the masses; military coups; political murders and treatment of political opponents; student unrest; liberation movements; civil war—none of these problems have been touched upon, or at best only slightly.

But if one is to judge from some of the latest films—like Sembene's *EMITAI* or Med Hondo's *SOLEIL O*—the politically-minded film is on the advance. Without doubt, such films will meet with great difficulty, particularly in their home countries. The experience with *SOLEIL O*, which was not even acknowledged as the official Mauritanian entry by the government in spite of the prize it received at the Carthage Film Festival in 1970, shows clearly the difficulties lying ahead. In fact, it is hard to believe that African film-makers will be able to extend their field of critical liberty against what state authorities seem to assume as their own interests.

Government benevolence, for the African film-maker, is especially necessary at this time, when African cinema depends so much upon the law-maker to set up structures enabling African producers to gain a foothold. Films made in Nigeria seem a step ahead in this regard, at least at first glance. Films made there give the impression that any political theme can be expressed. Both Calpenny productions—*KONGI'S HARVEST*, based on a play by

<sup>7</sup> William Walling, in *Africa Report*, June 1971, p. 29

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30

<sup>9</sup> Guy Hennebelle, *op. cit.*





KONGI'S HARVEST

Wole Soyinka (who does not like the film at all) and *BULLFROG IN THE SUN*, inspired by two novels by Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*, with the Biafran war as background—deal with highly political topics. But it must be stated that it is difficult to call these all-African cast films truly African, as the directors of both were foreigners (the Afro-American Ossie Davis and the German Hans-Jürgen Pohland). And the foreign capital involved in both seems to have had more than a little say in the matter.

On the other hand, it might be that co-productions—a number of which have been organized in Algeria lately—will help keep up a liberal atmosphere as far as themes are concerned. If things cannot be stated bluntly, there are always more subtle ways to convey the message. One way is to laugh about presumptuous modes of the new African Establishment, as shown by Moustapha Alassane in the first African cartoons, *LA VOYAGE DE SIM*, showing a state visit amongst frogs, and *LA MORT DE GANDJI* (DEATH OF GANDJI). Comedies have also employed the possibilities of ridiculing military and state authorities in general, such as the brilliant slapstick film *BADOU BOY* by the Senegalese Djibril Diop Mambety, which gives the part of “the law” to a stupid and incredibly bow-legged policeman who hunts a youth through Dakar in a series of comic situations.

As can be seen, there is a wealth of themes in African film-making, which—after all—is only a decade old. Thematically, the African film is well on its way and shows a number of promising directors.

#### THE MULTITUDE OF STYLES IN AFRICAN FILM-MAKING

“One has never seen films made by blacks. Blacks have never seen a film made by blacks. They have

seen films of the whites, and in Africa there is no cinema of the blacks because they want to make films as the whites do.” There still is some truth in this statement by Jean-Luc Godard. But things have developed. Some films made by black Africans—e.g., Sembene’s *MANDABI* and Traore’s *DIEGUE-BI* have had significant African audiences in the past year or so—but most of the time it is still true that African film-makers have to visit international film festivals in order to see the works of their colleagues. Considering the small number of African productions and their distribution difficulties, particularly on the African continent itself, it is quite clear that the taste of African audiences and of film-makers has been influenced to a large extent by foreign films. It is safe to say that there is not yet a specifically African style of film-making. Indeed, African film directors are trying out many different ways. Some closely follow the example set by one foreign film-maker or another, e.g., it has been said that *MOKHTAR* shows the influence of Godard; or that *LA FEMME AU COUTEAU* (THE WOMAN WITH THE KNIFE) by Timité Bassori, or *MOUNA OU LE REVE D’UN ARTISTE* (MOUNA OR AN ARTIST’S DREAM) by Henri Duparc (both from the Ivory Coast), or that *JEU* by the Tunisian Ali Borgini or *UNE SI SIMPLE HISTOIRE* (SO SIMPLE A STORY) by his compatriot Abdellatif Benammar, have been made in the European vein—which, by the way, is not a criticism of their quality.

In some of the North African films there is clearly an influence of the Egyptian film, which has wide distribution from Dakar in the West to East Africa. But whether contributions are due to the American, French, Italian, Russian, Indian or Egyptian film, African film-makers are clearly trying to get onto their own feet. It is rare that they content themselves with simply copying the examples set. Everyone is





### L'OPIUM ET LA BATON

searching for his own way, keeping aloof of the commercial film, trying to develop a personal style and more and more addressing himself to a national public.

This latter problem—for which public to make a film?—is of course linked to the commercial and political possibilities of distributing a film in Africa, a point to be discussed later. But the question—who is primarily to be the “consumer” of the film?—clearly affects its style and also the language to be used. More and more African film-makers think it a necessity to use African languages in their films playing in Africa. If not, they feel that the acting, in its general impression on the local audience, will be artificial and unconvincing. This is why Sembene, in his last film, *EMITAI*, has his actors speak Diola, why Samb's *KODOU* is in Woloff, and why, in the films from Niger, Hausa and Djerba are spoken. Words and gestures are very much linked, particularly in African culture where the spoken word is of primary importance. There is also a more practical reason for having the actors speak their home languages, because many films, particularly the low budget sub-Saharan films, use only a few professional actors, with most of the acting done by amateurs who are much more at ease in their own language.

The main idea seems to be that films in African languages are much better, so far as acting and local flavor are concerned, even if later versions in

European languages have to be made. At the same time another goal is achieved: the African film-makers clearly emphasize that they want to make films for Africans and no longer want to give priority to the market of the former colonial power. Given the limited size of the national home market, a number of problems arise from this “Africanization” of the African film that will be taken up later. Insofar as originality of style is concerned, the new trend makes for authenticity and self-consciousness and is a step towards the development of a truly African cinema.

That there is always the danger of a step back, however, is shown by Rachedi's *L'OPIUM ET LA BATON*, a Hollywood-like war film with all the splendor and weaknesses of the genre, easily the most expensive Algerian film to date but certainly not the most impressive. In spite of its popular success, this film does not reflect the main quality found in most African films: the director's search for new ways to show his findings and/or feelings. It can generally be said, in fact, that the African cinema is an *auteur* cinema—not turned towards commercial concerns, but towards art. Usually operating under stringent economic conditions—particularly in sub-Saharan Africa—it is his longing for self-expression that drives the African *cinéaste* to realize his film against a great number of difficulties. Only strong individuals take up this challenge, and this may well be one of the



reasons why African films and film-makers show so many different themes and styles.

Thus, African film-makers express themselves in styles ranging from the "neo-realism" of Sembene to the somewhat anarchical playfulness of Djibril Diop's *BADOU BOY*; from the ironical, musically constructed *CONCERTO POUR UN EXIL* by Desiré Ecaré to the simplicity of Ganda's *CABASCABO* and the witty, naive films of Alassane; from the polemical indignation of Rachedi's *L'AUBE DES DAMNES* to the slow and silent protest of Bennani's *WECHMA*. Besides the differing cultural backgrounds and political convictions of the film-makers, the stylistic differences are due as much to the budgets of the various directors' production groups and the political conditions in their countries. Some of these *cinéastes* have been professionally trained in France, Italy, Russia or Germany. Some are auto-didacts. Some, as is the case with many Algerians, are given big budgets by state institutions; others are helped by television stations and by expatriate development organizations; a few work with money awarded to their script or advanced against future profits, while others go ahead with their limited private means, buying a few hundred feet of film stock whenever they can afford it. The last are by no means the least interesting or original, as is proved by the violent and inventive *SOLEIL O* by Med Hondo from Mauritania. If the African film is today well on its way, this is due to the dynamic, untiring efforts of a number of individuals. Against all odds, they have given the African cinema a start, and by now they hope to have convinced the state authorities in their countries that it is urgently necessary to take steps favoring the protection and development of African cinema.

### THE ECONOMICS OF DISTRIBUTION AND PRODUCTION

At the end of a long study on the aesthetics of the cinema, André Malraux once stated, "... besides, the cinema is an industry." There are certainly others who would insist that the cinema is in the first place an industry and "besides, an art."<sup>10</sup> We shall now briefly discuss the situation of film distribution and film production in Africa, taking our examples mainly from Francophone Africa.

The situation of the cinema is different from one country to another, depending to a certain extent on the political climate, but with a few exceptions it can be generally stated that the pre-independence system of distribution is still going strong. In French-speaking Africa there are two French companies—Comacico and Secma—which have a quasi-monopoly on distribution. They own the majority of the approximately 220 theatres and do practically all the programming for the rest. A third company, American, installed itself in 1970; but Afram, as it is known, has not yet built up a network of its own theatres and now acts only as an importer-distributor. Thus, practically all films entering Africa, except for non-commercial films shown at ciné-clubs, embassies, cultural centers and the like, are controlled by Comacico and Secma. The choice of films to be

exhibited is entirely in their hands—with the exception of Algeria, Tunisia and, to a certain extent, Guinea. The result is programs dominated by the current low-quality detective and adventure films from Western countries—with the Arab countries and India also providing many of their lesser productions. Rarely are films of international reputation shown and, if so, in expensive theatres in the capitals, where prices are prohibitive for an African mass audience.

The two-headed monopoly, Comacico and Secma, buy the rights of exploitation for films in Africa very cheaply, since foreign producers do not pay much attention to the African market. These films have already made their money elsewhere. But an African film-maker producing for his home market is offered the same small amount of money. Sembene, for example, was offered 2,000 NF (about \$400) for his *BOROM SARRET*, although the film had cost him 30 times that amount. Because of this "dumping" of films into the African market and the monopolistic power of the two French companies, the African film has no chance in its natural market.

There are exceptions. Algeria has nationalized its production, distribution and exhibition of films. For a number of years the country had to suffer under the boycott initiated by the monopolists and was forced to live on its film reserves until, finally, the monopolists gave in. Distribution in Guinea has also been nationalized but Secma and Comacico still distribute there, although now through a state agency. In Tunisia, state and private production and distribution exist, but it is a state control commission that makes the choice of films shown in the country. Still, the strength of the two companies was again demonstrated when the Upper Volta nationalized its cinema but was forced to give back the theatres. On the other hand, the monopolists are becoming more flexible now and have offered some African producers a contract on a percentage basis—something never before done in Africa. But how can the African producer determine the real income of his film when there are no supervisory bodies?

The structure of the film industry in most of Africa, in fact, must be said to have hindered the development of a national African cinema. The distribution companies have not helped in financing the production of films or in setting up a cinematographic infra-structure. In this way they have discouraged African film-makers who have turned to their governments to ask for protection of the African film. The FEPACI (Federation pan-africaine des cinéastes) has pointed out that until recently all film producers within the OCAM states could not provide more than 10% of the demand by African theatres for films. [Note: OCAM—*Organisation commune d'Afrique Malagasi et Mauritius*—is a group of former French colonies in Africa, almost all of which are French-speaking. OCAM members have common currency, the C.F.A. francs, and they collaborate on economic, social and cultural matters. An OCAM representative holds a seat on the French cabinet. FEPACI, which collaborates with OCAM—e.g., in organizing the Third Festival of African Films at Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, last March—has estimated that potential film-goers in the OCAM

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Schaeffer, in *Essais sur les mass media et la culture*, UNESCO



nations number 60 million, with 500 theatres.—G.H.]. It would be considerable stimulus to African production if African films could get favored distribution within the OCAM nations. The large population of the group would automatically be interesting to well-to-do producers and would encourage co-productions between member states. In any case, it would enable film producers to recoup the money invested in their films and to continue making films, which under present conditions is very difficult. Finally, African film producers could really concentrate on making films for an African public and not for Europeans. For the development of a genuine African film art and industry it is necessary for the films to be seen by a large African audience under economically sound conditions, i.e., in the normal commercial circuit. Until now, African films have been shown mainly on the non-commercial level in French cultural institutes in France and Africa. The film unit of the French foreign service is given these rights in return for financial and technical aid in film production.

In spite of the fact that the 60 short and long films produced in OCAM countries to date have won 20 international prizes, awards or honorary mentions, few have found commercial distribution. But if distribution seems to be the crucial point, many OCAM countries also lack the necessary equipment, personnel and finances for film production. As far as most French-speaking areas are concerned, post-production work on the films is usually done in Paris, thus raising the costs. Technical personnel is especially lacking. Cameramen and sound engineers are scarce, although there is a growing number of film directors. As far as actors are concerned, the low budget films for the most part use amateurs.

But even the countries with sufficient equipment and personnel very often produce only a fraction of the films of which they are technically capable. The reason for this is the lack of capital. There is no hope that private capital will flow into African film production so long as the question of distribution is not solved or some other form of guarantee for the invested money is not found. African investors usually prefer to place their money into safer and faster rewarding industries; they have yet to get used to investing in film. As far as theatres are concerned, there seems to be a growing number of movie-houses owned by Africans, but they are still dependent on the expatriate distributors who do not earn the major part of their income within Africa.

Under such conditions, Algeria, after winning her independence, nationalized film production and distribution. Two state offices—the O.N.C.I.C. (Office national pour le Commerce et l'industrie cinématographique), distributor and main producer of Algerian films, and the Office des Actualités Algériennes, which produces newsreels and short and feature-length films—have to respect the principles of rentability. Since each feature film (there are about 350 theatres in Algeria) returns a maximum of something under 70,000 Pounds Sterling, this is normally the limit of a film's budget. Once in a while, for prestige reasons, more expensive productions are

allowed; the most expensive Algerian film, *L'OPIUM ET LA BATON*, officially cost about 200,000 Pounds, although it is rumored to have been twice that much.<sup>11</sup> As the Algerian example shows, the home market alone is big enough to support a national film production.

Smaller nations, however, have to find some sort of cooperation, giving preference to the member states' films. Some projects are under study, among them the aforementioned cooperation of the OCAM countries and a project proposed by Tahar Cheriaa, the Tunisian director of the Carthage Film Festival, who is also with the Paris-based Agence de Coopération culturelle et technique, a cooperative organization of French-speaking countries all over the world. To summarize, there does not seem to be much hope for the advancement of national African cinemas without efficient state intervention.

As far as the cinematographic infra-structure is concerned, most countries have an official film unit, in many cases developed out of former colonial film units and now usually part of the Ministry of Information. They provide the weekly or monthly *actualités*, or newsreels, and other films used for the government's self-representation. Very often they cover only the national scene and get international news from international news services. The national film services also produce documentaries, educational and tourist-propaganda films. Although these services are often well equipped and sometimes offer independent film-makers certain facilities and financial aid, it does not seem very likely that African feature films will develop from them. One of the reasons might well be that they are closely supervised by government and cannot offer the individual director all the freedom he needs for more artistic efforts.

In some countries, the government's concentration on television, which draws much of the means and personnel into its services, also seems to be a hindrance to the development of the African cinema. Paulin Vieyra, director of the Senegalese Service du Cinéma, mentions that Nigeria can be proud of having a well-developed television network but that in ten years of independence she has not yet produced a really important Nigerian film.

That television and film can very well live together is demonstrated in Algeria and Tunisia. It should also be mentioned that television can offer great advantages to film-makers in terms of production and distribution. Television offers an important market, for instance, to the experimental film, which often has difficulty finding distribution.

Besides the re-organization of distribution and production, therefore, and the necessary augmentation of trained personnel, better cooperation between the existing audio-visual services and creative film-makers seems of utmost importance for the further development of African cinema as both art and industry. In this way, the purposes of both groups can be realized—art and public service.

<sup>11</sup> William Walling, in *Africa Report*, June 1971, p. 31



Left, below: Jorge Sanjines, exiled from Bolivia  
Left: Miguel Littin, exiled from Chile

# IN LATIN AMERICA



## 'THEY SHOOT' FILM-MAKERS

Peter Biskind

Some ten years ago, riding a wave of revolutionary enthusiasm, a new, vigorous Latin American cinema suddenly emerged. Glauber Rocha, working in Brazil's Cinema Novo movement, gave us films like *Antonio das Mortes* and *Black God, White Devil*. Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, working in Argentina's Cinema Liberacion movement, produced *The Hour of the Furnaces*. Bolivia's Jorge Sanjines made *Blood of the Condor*, an exposé of sterilisation programmes carried out by the Peace Corps among Bolivian Indians. From Cuba there was Tomas Gutierrez Alea's *Memories of Underdevelopment* and Humberto Solas' *Lucia*. And from Chile, Miguel Littin's *The Jackal of Nahueltoro*.

Now, just as suddenly, this movement has vanished. With the exception of Cuba, the Latin American film scene has become a wasteland. National cinemas come and go, for a whole variety of complex reasons, but in the case of Latin America the cause seems fairly clear. Many of the most promising film-makers are in prison or in exile or dead. In country after country, as right-wing regimes fought to retain or recover

their power, governments have clamped down on cultural workers—poets, singers, journalists, playwrights and film-makers. In Latin America, culture is as much a battleground as are the factories or the streets. The experience of colonisation has taught its victims that culture is an instrument of class domination. According to Andres Racz, a young Chilean film-maker and former critic for *Chile Hoy*, 'the government hates the artist as much as it hates the revolutionary, because it realises that they are the same.'

The plight of Latin American film-makers is most evident in Chile, where the revolutionary process was furthest advanced and the reaction against it most brutal. The Junta's attack on film-makers must be seen as part of a larger effort to recapture Chilean culture for the middle-class. When Allende was elected in 1970, Chilean media transmitted cultural images manufactured in the United States. *Time* magazine, no friend of Allende's Chile, reported that the leading right-wing daily, *El Mercurio*, received a generous subsidy from the CIA. More than half the programmes on Santiago's leading

TV channel, including *The Untouchables*, *The FBI*, *Mission Impossible* and *Disneyland*, were produced in the US. Until 1972 over 80 per cent of the movies shown on Chilean screens came from Hollywood. The USIA diverted students and intellectuals with festivals of avant-garde film-makers such as Brakhage and Warhol.

When the United States imposed its 'invisible blockade' of the Allende government, only two kinds of goods continued to flow into Chile: weapons for the military and cultural commodities for the Chilean media. As the revolutionary forces gained momentum, a vigorous popular culture, inspired by the example of Cuba, emerged to confront the official culture. Colourful wall paintings, songs performed by Victor Jara and Angel Parra, agit-prop posters, 'people's' comics, a flood of inexpensive books from the newly nationalised State Publishing House, and home-produced films chased Donald Duck, Elliot Ness and Dirty Harry out of the country.

The Allende government immediately recognised the importance of film. Chile Films, the state film company organised in 1941, ceased churning out ersatz imitations of Hollywood romances, and turned to the production of documentaries, newsreels and features intended to serve the process of social transformation. Miguel Littin, whose *Jackal of Nahueltoro* had been completed before Allende was elected, became head of the Chilean film industry and produced a stunning feature, *Promised Land*, completed in Cuba just before the coup. Raul Ruiz directed four or five features, but much of the energy and money went into documentaries and newsreels. Films like *A Half Litre of Milk* (on a food programme for the poor) or *Operation Winter* (on a project to help shanty town dwellers whose shacks were washed away in winter rains) publicised government programmes and showed the people to themselves, for the first time the agents of history rather than its victims.

Production was only the beginning. Newsreels and documentaries had to reach their target, in many cases people who had never seen a film before. Like other Latin American countries, Chile was well endowed with cinémathèques, located in the universities and catering, before Allende, to the art house tastes of students and intellectuals. As the cultural struggle intensified, the content and orientation of the cinémathèques began to change. The intellectuals who had hitherto been content to contemplate passively the felicities of Bergman, Fellini, Antonioni and Truffaut gradually came to see these films as irrelevant to their needs and the needs of the people, which were also becoming their own. Armed with portable generators, projectors and films, they travelled to shanty towns, factories and mines. Eisenstein, Vertov and Dovzhenko replaced Bergman and Truffaut. They showed Biberman's *Salt of the Earth*, Buñuel's *Los Olvidados*, Vigo, Renoir, and Cuban and Vietnamese films. Even *Citizen Kane* was screened for factory workers.

With the coup, all this activity ceased. Film-makers became the targets of arrests,



detention and torture. In June, during the first coup attempt, Argentine cameraman Hans Herman was shot and killed by right-wing troops attacking the governmental palace. Herman actually managed to film his own death; the footage has been used in several newsreels. An American filmmaker, Charles Horman, was taken from his home and shot to death in the National Stadium, where thousands of people were detained in the first days after the coup. Some workers in the film industry, like Hugo Jaramillo, were killed. Many were arrested, tortured and released, like Guillermo Cahn, Adriana del Rio Lazzarique, Marcello Romo (who appeared in *The Jackal of Nahueltoro*) and Ivan San Martin (who was in Costa-Gavras' *State of Siege*). Others are still in prison, like Maximo Gedda, Gladys Diaz and José Carrasco Tapia.

Over fifty film-makers, including Littin and Ruiz, left Chile in the months after the coup. Others decided to remain and continue to work within the country, at great risk. Among them were Carmen Bueno and Jorge Muller, who have since 'disappeared'. The Junta refuses to divulge their whereabouts, even to acknowledge that they have been arrested. Carmen Bueno is a 25-year-old actress who appeared in the closing sequence of *Promised Land* where, in a strangely prophetic moment, she is cut down by troops, her naked body bathed in her own blood. Jorge Muller is a 27-year-old cameraman who worked on Patricio Guzman's documentary *The First Year*, Saul Landau and Haskell Wexler's *Brazil: a Report on Torture*, Raul Ruiz's *The Penal Colony*, Landau's *Que Hacer* and Littin's *Promised Land*. In November 1974, while working on a documentary, they were forced into a car by members of the Chilean secret police.

Two people recently released from Tres Alamos concentration camp have reported that both Bueno and Muller are being held at the camp. Both have been beaten and tortured with electric shock. One former prisoner reported that for several weeks Carmen Bueno 'was taken daily to long torture sessions'. Bueno's name has recently appeared on a list released by the Junta of 119 Chileans allegedly killed in Argentina by security guards or by rival leftist factions. A report in the *New York Times* suggests that this story has no basis in fact. Observers fear that the list was fabricated as a cover for future executions, or for those already carried out.

Thousands of feet of newsreel footage in the Chile Films archives, showing the strikes, factory take-overs, workers' councils, land seizures, rallies, marches and other manifestations of the political ferment of the Allende period, have been burned. Chile Films itself is to be sold to private investors. The new head of the Cinematheque of the University of Chile also works for the USIA. More than half the downtown cinemas in Santiago have been closed, because of the inflation which now makes film-going a luxury. 'People have nothing to eat,' says Racz, 'so they can hardly go to the movies.' *Cabaret*, *The Godfather* and *Clockwork Orange* have been the biggest grossers. According to a *New York Times* report on conditions in a Santiago shanty-town that had been solidly

behind Allende, one man who described himself as a former Marxist, 'ripped down the socialist calendars and slogans that hung on walls of his two-room wooden shack. In their place, he put up some posters of Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse.' American cultural hegemony has been resumed.

The grim tale of film-makers in Chile is repeated in country after country. In Bolivia, Felix Gomez, cameraman for the UKAMAU film group which produced *Blood of the Condor*, was jailed in August 1971. Later that year the cameraman on *Hour of the Generals* was machine-gunned by soldiers while filming the army's take-over of a mine. Jorge Sanjines, head of the Bolivian Institute for Cinema from 1966 to 1968, went into exile in 1971 along with most of the UKAMAU group; there has been no significant film activity in Bolivia since. In June 1975, Antonio Eguino, director of photography for UKAMAU, was arrested for possession of a print of the Italian television documentary *The Courage of the People*, which he had shot.

In Uruguay, Walter Achugar and Eduard Terra, co-founders of the Third World Cinematheque, were arrested in 1972 as part of a government drive against the Tupamaros and their 'urban network'. Both were tortured. Achugar's wife was forced to listen to tape recordings of her husband's screams. Achugar was released after two months; Terra is still in prison. The film collection of the Cinematheque, one of the largest in Latin America, was destroyed. Mario Handler, who directed six short films, left the country in 1973 after being targeted for assassination by the Death Squad. The team of film-makers who made *In the Jungle There is Lots to Do*, an animated short for children, were forced to leave in 1974.

In Colombia, in 1972, four film-makers, Carlos and Julia Alvarez, Gabriella Samper and Manuel Vargas, were arrested for making films 'inciting to commit crime and violence'. Their films were seized as 'dangerous materials'.

In Brazil, the entire staff of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio were twice arrested. The police destroyed the film collection in the Museum's vaults, chopping films

like *Battleship Potemkin* into small pieces. Glauber Rocha went into exile in 1969. Although many film-makers stayed, and are now working, they make what are called *chanchadas*, 'pig-films'. Recently, the army stated that Vladimir Herzog, news director of TV Cultura, the state-owned educational television station, committed suicide after being interrogated by the security forces. Although accustomed to the sudden disappearance of friends and acquaintances, journalists, students and opponents of the regime have nevertheless challenged the army's version of the incident.

In Argentina, Julio Troxler, featured in Solanas' *The Hour of the Furnaces*, was shot to death by the right-wing Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA). Solanas' group went underground for two months, then issued a statement in support of Isabel Peron. According to Rodi Broullon of Tricontinental Film Centre, the largest distributor of Third World films in the United States, most Argentine films are heavily censored, both at the pre-production script stage and after completion. 'Those that are not banned are bombed,' said Broullon. The AAA and other right-wing groups attack theatres showing films that 'insult the military'. Film laboratories scrutinise film that comes in to be processed, to make sure that it is not subversive.

Rodi Broullon says that repression in Argentina has reached such a point that it takes as much time and preparation to arrange a clandestine screening of a film in a *barrio* as it would to carry out an action against a bank. 'Someone brings the projector, five more people bring little ten-minute rolls in their pockets, assemble the film on the spot, screen it, break it down again, and disappear. You need so much armed security to protect an audience of two or three hundred people that film is becoming a liability in mass struggle. Pamphlets and newspapers are cheaper to make and easier to distribute.'

Despite the harshness of authoritarian Latin American regimes, they have been surprisingly responsive to international pressure. As Racz put it, 'they're lackeys of world opinion because of their dependence on foreign capital.' In the past, letter-writing campaigns have been strikingly successful in obtaining the release of imprisoned film-makers. European film personalities like Simone Signoret, Yves Montand, Costa-Gavras, Jorge Semprun, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard and others have frequently lent their names to appeals for clemency. In the United States, the Emergency Committee to Defend Latin American Film-makers has been particularly active on behalf of Carmen Bueno and Jorge Muller.

Despite the repression, film-making in Latin America will continue. A few countries still provide relative freedom and safety for political refugees. Littin is working in Mexico, others in Peru, Venezuela and Cuba. Clandestine film-making is still possible in Argentina and countries where the left is strong. And it is certain that, when the Chilean Junta and regimes like it are destroyed, Latin American cinema will flourish once more, fulfilling the revolutionary promise of the popular movements that produced it. ■

**The Emergency Committee to Defend Latin American Film-makers has been set up to disseminate information on the repression of film-makers in Latin America, and to mobilise support for their defence and survival. Many members of the American film community, like Francis Ford Coppola, Arthur Penn, Elia Kazan, Jack Nicholson, John Simon, Judith Crist and Jon Voight, along with European directors Werner Herzog, Jean Marie Straub, Volker Schlöndorff, Jorn Donner, have joined the Committee in its efforts to obtain the release of Carmen Bueno and Jorge Muller. Inquiries should be addressed to the Emergency Committee to Defend Latin American Film-makers, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, New York 10012, USA.**





# ANTONIO DAS MORTES

Brazil, 1969

Director: Glauber Rocha

*Cert: X. dist: Connoisseur. p.c.: Glauber Rocha/Produções Cinematográficas Mapa. exec. p: Zelito Viana. p: Claude-Antoine Mapa, Glauber Rocha. sc: Glauber Rocha. ph: Alfonso Beato. col: Eastman Colour. ed: Eduardo Escorel. a.d.: Glauber Rocha. m: Marlos Nobre, Walter Queiroz, Sérgio Ricardo. l.p.: Maurício do Valle (Antonio das Morte), Odete Lara (Laura), Hugo Carvana (Police Chief Mattos), Othon Bastos (The Professor), Joffre Soares (Colonel Horacio), Lorival Pariz (Coirana), Rosa Maria Penna (Santa Bárbara), Mário Gusmão (Antão), Vinicius Salvatori ("Mata Vaca"), Emanuel Cavalcanti (Priest), Sante Scaldasferri (Batista). 8,550 ft. 95 mins. Subtitles.*

FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 7.30



## Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro, O (Antonio das Mortes)

Brazil, 1969

Director: Glauber Rocha

*Cert:* X. *dist:* Connoisseur. *p.c.:* Glauber Rocha/Produções Cinematográficas Mapa. *exec. p:* Zelito Viana. *p:* Claude-Antoine Mapa, Glauber Rocha. *sc:* Glauber Rocha. *ph:* Alfonso Beato. *col:* Eastman Colour. *ed:* Eduardo Escorel. *a.d.:* Glauber Rocha. *m:* Marlos Nobre, Walter Queiroz, Sérgio Ricardo. *l.p.:* Maurício do Valle (*Antonio das Mortes*), Odete Lara (*Laura*), Hugo Carvana (*Police Chief Mattos*), Othon Bastos (*The Professor*), Joffre Soares (*Colonel Horacio*), Lorival Pariz (*Coirana*), Rosa Maria Penna (*Santa Bárbara*), Mário Gusmão (*Antão*), Vinicius Salvatori (*"Mata Vaca"*), Emanuel Cavalcanti (*Priest*), Sante Scaldasferri (*Batista*). 8,550 ft. 95 mins. Subtitles.

Antonio das Mortes, legendary killer of bandits, recalls how in 1940 he tracked down the last of them in the arid and poverty-stricken north-east of Brazil. Told by police inspector Mattos that a new bandit, Coirana, has appeared there, Antonio collects his cloak, wide-brimmed hat and gun and they set off for a remote village autocratically ruled by a blind, tyrannous old landowner, Colonel Horacio. Coirana leads a band of *beatos*, poor landless peasants, mostly negresses, who have turned to religious fanaticism. While his followers chant, Coirana fights Antonio in a ritual duel and receives a mortal wound. Antonio undergoes a crisis of conscience in which he realises that his victim represented the oppressed peasantry; he changes sides, joining them in their fight against the landowner, who has brought in a gang of professional killers to deal with them. Meanwhile Colonel Horacio has discovered that his ex-prostitute mistress Laura is having an affair with Mattos, who has political ambitions which include the introduction of American capital. Laura urges Mattos to kill the Colonel, taunting him for his cowardice because he dare not, so that

when they are discovered she herself disgustingly kills Mattos. Coirana at last dies from his wound, and Antonio drags his body into the desert for burial. As the *beatos* sing and dance on a mountain ledge, the hired killers pump bullets into them, leaving only two of their leaders alive, a girl in white and a negro in scarlet. In a final confrontation Antonio, aided only by the local schoolmaster, shoots down the Colonel's hired killers, while the negro despatches the Colonel. The schoolmaster is left with Laura's body, and Antonio walks off along a modern highway.

*Antonio das Mortes* is set in the ritual framework of the legendary war of the warrior saint against the dragon of cruelty, of which the brightly coloured images of St. George slaying the Dragon with which the film opens and closes are a Christian equivalent. After a credits sequence showing the killing of a bandit, the schoolmaster is seen teaching the children Brazilian history, in which such facts as the country's discovery by the Portuguese and its independence end in a historical event to which he gives equal significance—the death in 1938 of the great anti-government bandit Lampião, who had dominated the *sertao* for eighteen years and whose severed head, still to be seen in the medical school in Salvador, had to be carried round and exhibited in the towns of the region before the people would believe he had been killed. Antonio's reminiscences of his bandit-hunting include his pursuit of Corisco in *Black God, White Devil*, of which *Antonio das Mortes* is virtually a continuation. In the earlier film Antonio is employed by church and government to destroy the religious fanatics and the bandits, but he also almost unwittingly becomes a liberator from false prophets. But as he says in this film, "Lampião was my mirror", and with him dead Antonio now becomes a revolutionary. For a time he is himself uncertain which side represents the dragon, because he believes that God writes in crooked lines; but after his crisis he proclaims "Now I know who the enemy is" as the lorry full of the Colonel's hired killers grinds up the hill. The enemy is in fact the whole corrupt social system, the capitalist oligarchy which Antonio overthrows by force, aided by the intelligentsia in the person of the schoolmaster and tacitly supported by the priest. Glauber Rocha clothes this revolutionary message in a remarkable visual language in which the primitivism and violence of the religious dances or the scenes of savage slaughter alternate with moments of absolute stillness, as for instance when the girl in white sits icon-like with her black hair falling loose as she confronts Antonio in his crisis with the command, "Go and walk the fiery roads of earth asking forgiveness for your crimes". Rocha draws on ballads and folksongs to develop and comment on the action, and his use of colour also enhances the effect of the rituals, for which the blazing heat of the grey landscape of sparse grass and cactus desert provides a timeless setting. The colour sometimes matches the macabre quality of Rocha's imagination, as in the scene where Laura's already lurid purple evening dress is spattered with blood as she stabs Mattos, or when blood pours from her mouth and down her white neck as the schoolteacher kisses her after she has been shot at the end. Some critics have objected that this flamboyant operatic style conflicts with the political message, or have suggested that the bare bones underneath the theatricality are only those of a Western anyway. But this is no mythical frontier of the past: in the first half of this century the distressed peasants of the arid backlands of the *sertao* continued to turn to banditry or messianic religious movements, but in the Fifties and Sixties the Peasant Leagues led by Francisco Julião have awakened the Brazilian and American governments to the problem of the landless peasants in north-eastern Brazil, and fears of peasant revolution have led to a crash development programme backed by the dollars which in the film the corrupt police inspector plans to pocket. Glauber Rocha's magnificent film is in fact firmly tied to the present-day political and social reality of his underdeveloped homeland.

KONSTANTIN BAZAROV



# ROCHA INTERVIEW

## A PROPOS POLITICAL CINEMA

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Q. It seems difficult to interview you at present. Although you were neglected for years, you have been interviewed many times since you left Brazil and in these interviews there is revealed an attitude of Europeans towards the Third World which you have denounced. Further, certain theories have been developed since 1968 which rest on an unconscious psychological principle which is still colonialist. They criticise the cinema for not being sufficiently political, and use your films, and those of Solanas, as concrete alternatives. What do you think of this?

A. We should define the problem and clarify it scientifically. What is the cinema? It is a means of communication of technological origin, inexorably bound up with technological development and more and more diffuse - though in different ways - in relation to that development. Nowadays, for example, the cinema is widespread not only on the screen, but also through television. Here a small problem arises. Is television competing with the cinema or is the cinema competing with television? Or else, is the screen we have in our homes one which resembles existing means of communication or which exists as a new mode? To think of these problems is to realise that the object of discussion should not be the cinema but the use we make of it; not the audio-visual language, but how we use it.

If it is true that the cinema as a whole has in common the elements of image and sound, it is also true that one can make scientific or didactic films, recordings, narratives or poems, exactly as one can make scientific texts, political essays, pamphlets, poems or novels with written or spoken language. It seems to me that it is not, in itself, more progressive to write a novel rather than a pamphlet, or a poem rather than an essay. It would be indicative of a deep sense of guilt if film makers round these differences in the cinema which do not exist elsewhere.

I believe, instead, that the cinema has the fundamental function of reflecting, in different ways and without rules, a reality in which the political problems are the prevailing element. Nevertheless, one can follow only subjective schemes and systems as one cannot be bound by the use of a cinematographic language. This is also because politics, in the true sense, means actions, that moment when a social class fights another social class. There is not much room for subjectivity in action, but when one speaks of a 'political film' one refers to politics as a science, that is to something which has not yet become politics as action but the preparation for it. Here the discussion can be valued less objectively. To be political means to be tied down in the way we live, in our class relations, how we see them in our social context, what place we give them in the story of our lives, how we value them in relation to our hypotheses of political action.

I can use my camera politically either filming reality directly or recreating it through my subjective vision. But in both cases, subjectivity is in some sense present. Even if I merely 'film', I am not at all objective. In fact, I will reproduce in film the reality which interests me most directly and with which I am most directly connected. In any case, the fact that there is in the Third World a politically relevant alternative between a certain kind of cinema devoted to documentaries and one devoted to fiction is an invention peculiar to Europe.



Personally, I believe that the common objective for the Third World must be the emancipation of the market from imperialist domination. Of course it is obvious that imperialism of the cinema would prefer it if we were to close ourselves off into a kind of ghetto for pure and uncontaminated artists and surrendered the market. But we must understand that the economic emancipation of a nation in the cinema, as well as in other, more important fields, is the first condition of political emancipation.

Paradoxically, I would say that in Europe and the United States the left wing wants to destroy the consumer society, whereas in the Third World the left wing wants to create it. And this is the fundamental contradiction. From this perhaps, through a series of logical and ideological transformations, are derived certain sceptical tendencies in the attitude of the European left towards the culture of the Third World, and the essentially non-Marxist subjectivism with which the European left wing sometimes applies the laws of its own historical development to a society with a different history.

Q. But in what sense does the Third World cinema, or your own cinema from BARRAVENTO to CABEZAS CORTADAS, contribute to liberation? Perhaps most of the European scepticism towards Brazilian cinema derives from the impression that no concrete answer can be given to that question.

A. But to what extent does a purely political essay published in a European magazine of a few thousand copies contribute to liberation? I don't really know. Frankly, I believe that the impossibility of giving an answer to such a question derives from the 'impossibility' of the question, which is abstract and purely ideological. If I make a film and a million people see it in Latin America, I cannot know if and to what extent the consciousness of these people benefits from it. But although I lack concrete proof, I am convinced that in general the films of the Cinema Novo have contributed and still contribute towards releasing part of the Brazilian public from the complexes of imperialist colonisation with its imposed mental patterns and its centuries-long coating of Eurocentric culture.

At present there are many people filming demonstrations and making documentaries about reality. This is positive and useful. But if I wish to make a film which nobody else is making, instead of doing what the others are already doing I can still do something useful, because that too is necessary. Of course, I can't limit myself to playing at making films. The cinema is information, didactics, agitation; it has to be culture in the sense of qualitative communication, as only qualitative communication is revolutionary communication and because only this can modify consciousness. Whether we do all this with direct documentation or with fiction, with drama or with comedy, with satire or with epic poetry, is only determined by different subjective or objective historical conditions. In Brazil, for example, it is easier to explain a problem to peasants using the 'cangaceiros' than using the workers. In the same way it is easier to describe its condition to the middle class through a hero like Macunaima than through the 'cangaceiros'.

In other words revolution is an action and, even if it is prepared by forms of consciousness, it is 'historical' only in so far as it is action. Such an action in order to be concrete, is addressed by and towards determined historical conditions which are different even if they are apparently similar. The real danger is always to create a schema of action, that is to say a schema of a historical situation. In so far as it is different history, the concrete dimension of the action which changes it has to be different too. In this way there can't be any catholicism in the revolution: either a revolution is heterodox, or does not develop at all. In this lie the bases of the misunderstandings that exist in certain claims to have exported revolution. They hide a great danger. For example, Maoism is very important as a historical modality, precisely as Chinese revolution. But when it is imported by the European intellectuals, just because it's history belonging to another history, it is transformed into neo-Stalinism.

In the same way, in the cinema, one has to beware of offering and claiming schemes, orthodox systems and binding methods.



# CINEMA NOVO

## THE PITFALLS OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM

-- Hans Proppe and Susan Tarr

The "discovery" and elucidation of a national culture in the *cinema novo* of Brazil is a progressive step forward from the deformed and plastic imitations of Hollywood film which preceded it. However, cinema novo, exciting, dynamic and progressive as it is, has internal limitations that some audiences and critics are unwilling to grapple with.

Just as political consciousness develops dialectically from one stage to progressively higher stages, the art or cultural artifacts produced will correspond to these stages of development and reflect material reality. It is important to be able to distinguish these stages and, while encouraging all steps forward in this developmental process, not to give premature total approbation to the more primitive and limited stages. In the case of European and American audiences, cinema novo has received accolades and political laurels in which the enthusiasm is based more on a well-intentioned cultural paternalism than on constructive political criticism. In the area of political films, this attitude is by no means limited to evaluations of the cinema novo. It is symptomatic of a difficulty that arises when a film is exported and viewed-interpreted by people without a real knowledge of the fundamentals of the national context.

Godard's films, intended for the organized political cadre of France, are denounced by unorganized students in the U.S. A film designed for organized Peronist workers and militants is mistakenly hailed by Godard as a "Latin American POTEMKIN." The same film is equally mistakenly denounced by certain American audiences as being "Peronist propaganda" and therefore fascist. In political struggle as well as in cultural struggle, tactics and strategy must be evaluated from the perspective of the concrete historical circumstances from which they derived. Such is the case with cinema novo.

Numerous claims have been made by advocates of cinema novo and particularly by Glauber Rocha as to the revolutionary intention and effect of this body of work. When Rocha, a prolific writer and influential film theoretician, makes such contradictory claims as that cinema novo wants to "make a contribution to the revolution" and that he does not "believe that we will arrive at that state by educating the people" because "the film, after all, is a game like sports...a stimulant like drugs", it becomes necessary to take a critical look at cinema novo, specifically the films of Rocha.

It will be argued here that the symbolism and metaphor upon which cinema novo relies so heavily, rather than clarifying the audience's experience, serves to further mystify and perhaps even exacerbate a painful reality. Principally at issue is whether or not the three recurrent themes and protagonists of cinema novo, the bandit cangaceiros, the fanatical mystics and the all-pervasive peasant suffering have been utilized in such a way as to raise political consciousness and elucidate the situation. Similarly, notwithstanding the stated intention of the

cinema novo filmmakers to obscure political meanings in order to avoid censorship and repression, the political ambiguity of many of these films is as much a function of a mistaken political analysis as anything else. In addition, the unique visual aspects of cinema novo can be viewed as attempts to establish a film style which emphasizes the aesthetic rather than the political.

Since most of the best known cinema novo films deal with the social conditions of the Northeast of Brazil, we must first examine that area and its extreme culture and way of life.

## OF CANGACEIROS. SANTOS AND SERTANEJOS

The Northeast can be divided into two general regions--the eastern coastal area extending 30 to 40 miles inland and rich in vegetation and the western interior, the *sertao*, an arid desert periodically subject to droughts in which as much as a third of the population of the area die. In the early centuries of Portuguese rule, it was the Northeast coastal region that determined the destiny of Brazil as it was the seat of colonial rule. The eastern area is dominated by large landholdings and sugar cane plantations (the *engenhos*) while the *sertao* is dominated by cattle-raising interests (the *fazenda*). The rise of the *engenhos* resulted in feudal social relationships, including the importation of slaves from Africa, and the sugar-cane monoculture destroyed the soil and prevented agrarian diversification. The social and productive relationships of the *sertao* region have been described as most closely resembling a form of primitive capitalism, with a large, desperate and unorganized labor force creating a free-labor situation exploited by the rulers of the cattle empires. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and coinciding with the overthrow of the monarchy in 1889, the locus of Brazilian power began a shift to the south. Competition from Cuba in the area of sugar production and the rise of coffee, grown primarily in the south, as the nation's most important export were the primary factors in determining this shift. Meanwhile, an emerging and more modernized sugar industry began to grow up in the south as well and these producers were soon producing sugar at lower prices than the producers of the Northeast. At the close of World War II, world sugar prices rose steeply and a number of plantation owners who had left their property returned with the intention of cashing in on the new demand for their product. Their efforts to expel the peasants who had taken over small plots and were raising subsistence crops resulted in the first Peasant League formations.

The *sertao* has historically been a great disaster area. In addition to severe droughts, heavy rains contribute to flash floods that frequently wipe out entire settlements along the river-banks. The inhabitants of the *sertao* originally included runaway and freed slaves as well as the Negro-Portuguese, Portuguese-Indian



and Indian-Negro mixtures common in the area. The *sertanejo* or "backlander" clings tenaciously to this area that appears ill-suited to human habitation. While the devastating droughts that take such a toll can be seen as simply a curse of nature, the anachronistic relationship of landowners to peasants is the real clue to the misery of the Northeast. The cinema novo filmmakers frequently focus on the effects of this exploitative relationship, on the aberrative social/psychological phenomena that result, and less on the explicit nature of the relationship itself.

Josue de Castro in *Death in the Northeast* describes the psychic rhythms which appear during periods of famine as being schizoid, where the polar temperaments become the outlaw-bandit *cangaceiros* of the mystical and fanatic *santos* or visionaries"

"Activated by drought and famine, both saints and bandits arise, and both types can be merged in the same personality. Such a phenomenon was the celebrated fratricide Bento da Cruz de Joazeiro, who 'with a cross in one hand and a dagger in the other', meted out justice in his village... We may think of the *cangaceiro*, or bandit, as a personality in which the baser impulses released by hunger have won the upper hand over normal restraints. The religious fanatic, on the other hand, represents a victory of the abnormal exaltations of hunger. He is a man who has beat a retreat into the metaphysical. But both forms of escape--towards brute force or the metaphysical illusion--are distortions from which no good comes." (p. 61)

The periodic rise of religious fanaticism in the Northeast seems attributable as well to the combination of isolation, misery and frustration that is exploited by a charismatic religious leader relying heavily on the traditionally mystical religious elements, a combination of Catholicism and African religious ceremony called *macumba*. From Portugal came another ingredient, a popular quasi-religious belief system known as Sebastianism, which prophesied the return of the Portuguese king Sebastian who vanished in Africa in 1578 while fighting the Moors.

*Cangaceiros*, *santos* and *sertanejos*, the peasants of the sertao, are the central sources of cinema novo. VIDAS SECAS (1963); BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL (1963), ANTONIO DAS MORTES (1968); and THE GODS AND THE DEAD (1970) deal explicitly with these themes, while CINCO VEZES FAVELAS, THE GUNS (OS FUZIS), and GANGA ZUMBA (1964) have their historical reference points in these dominant sociological and psychological figures and events, while dealing with them less directly. Although the history of the Northeast is full of examples of religious rebellions stretching back into Brazilian history such as those of Joazeiro, Caldeiro and the events at Pedra Bonita in 1836 as well as the bandit activities of the *cangaceiros* Antonio Silvino and Rio Preto, two outstanding examples will suffice to explain the dimensions of the phenomenon, Antonio Conselheiro and Lampiao. These two are the most famous examples of the religious fanatic and the bandit of the Northeast, and references to them and the movements they spawned are prominent in the cinema novo films.

"It was natural that the deep-lying layers of our ethnic stratification should have cast up so extraordinary an anticlinal as Antonio Consel-

heiro" is the opening line of Euclides da Cunha's description of the religious fanatic who led a millenarian movement at the turn of the century. Antonio Vicente Mendes Maciel, or Conselheiro as he came to be known, was indeed a natural outcome of the physical and psychological forces which interact in the sertao. Da Cunha, in *Rebellion in the Backlands*, a remarkable account of the Conselheiro-led rebellion at Canudos in 1897, states that Conselheiro "was doing no more than to condense the obscurantism of the three separate races (sic)" which he categorizes as the "anthropomorphism of the savage" or the Brazilian Indian, the "animism of the African slaves" and the "historical atavism" of the mestizo. Wandering through the backlands of the Northeast in the 1880's for more than ten years, Conselheiro gathered a large following as a mystic and ascetic amalgamating Roman Catholicism, African religious belief and indigenous mysticism. This amalgam developed into a millenarian movement like that Europe had seen centuries earlier. Like its predecessor this movement had three main characteristics: 1. "A profound and total rejection of the present evil world, and a passionate longing for another and better one..." 2. "A fairly standardized 'ideology' of the chiliastic type" (the return of Christ or a savior like Sebastian), 3. "...a fundamental vagueness about the actual way in which the new society will be brought about." (from Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, pp. 57-58).

As a wandering prophet and pietist longing for the promised kingdom of God which Conselheiro felt had been subverted and abandoned by the orthodox church, he preached against both the established church and the newly-established republic. In 1882, the Catholic archbishop of Bahia, alarmed at the large following Conselheiro was attracting, instructed his pastors as follows:

"It having come to our knowledge that, in the central parishes of this archbishopric, there is a certain individual by the name of Antonio Conselheiro who goes about preaching to the people who come to hear his superstitious doctrines and an excessively rigid morality, thereby disturbing consciences and weakening in no small degree the authority of the priests in these places we ordain that your Reverence shall not consent to any such abuse in his parish, but shall let it be known to his parishoners that we absolutely forbid their congregating to hear such preachings. Seeing that in the Catholic Church the holy mission of indoctrinating the people belongs only to the ministers of religion, it follows that a layman, whoever he may be and however well instructed and virtuous, does not have the authority to exercise that right."

(Da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands*, p. 137)

Conselheiro made no great distinction between the Church and the State, branding the republic as the instrument of the "Anti-Christ" and "a supreme heresy". Citing the return of Dom Sebastiao (King Sebastain), Conselheiro prophesized "...and on that day when he and his small army shall arise, then shall he with the edge of the sword free all from the yoke of this Republic...". After a number of confrontations with representatives of the government and the Catholic Church, Conselheiro and his followers retreated to a small town, Canudos, to establish a religious settlement which eventually grew to a population



of three thousand. For the most part, those who flocked to Canudos were destitute peasant families. Also numbered among the settlers were a large group of cangaceiros, hardened and desperate bandit-outlaws, well-schooled in the use of weapons and techniques of survival in the inhospitable backlands. Prior to 1897, several expeditions of Army troops sent against the settlement were completely unsuccessful against the fortified town and the fierce dedication of the inhabitants of Canudos. Finally, in 1897, a new Army expedition was organized involving thousands of well-armed soldiers who proceeded to wipe out the town and kill every man, woman and child in Canudos.

If the millenarian movement of Conselheiro seems anachronistic coming at the turn of the century, the most recent and popular of the cangaceiros, Lampiao, who led a movement in the 1930's, indicates the nature of more contemporary developments in the Brazilian hinterlands. Virgulino Ferreira da Silva, known as "the Captain" or Lampiao, is perhaps the most popular legendary hero of the sertao and a direct model for such films as *ANTONIO DAS MORTES*, *BLACK GOD*, *WHITE DEVIL* and *THE GODS AND THE DEAD*. Lampiao exemplifies the inherent limitations of the social bandit in regard to the alleged "revolutionary" role of such figures. The development of a contemporaneous movement in Brazil, the Prestes column, provides a useful counterpoint when considering the activities of Lampiao and his band of followers.

Eric Hobsbawm in *Bandits* discusses Lampiao's exploits and provides a political framework to clarify the phenomenon of social banditry. Hobsbawm sees the bandit as a reformer not as a revolutionary, as an activist not as ideologue or prophet from "whom novel visions or plans of social and political organization are to be expected." Rather, as champions, heroes and avengers "theirs is an individual rebellion, which is socially and politically undermined, and which under normal--ie., non-revolutionary--conditions is not a vanguard of mass revolt, but rather the product and counterpart of the general passivity of the poor. They are the exceptions which prove the rule."

Lampiao was born into a middle-class farming and cattle-raising family. More than literate, he was an excellent poet and otherwise intellectually versatile. As was the case with many other cangaceiros, a blood feud was the starting point for his banditry. When Lampiao was seventeen, his family was expelled from their farm by another family, an expulsion to which Lampiao responded by forming an outlaw band consisting of his brothers and some thirty others (including several women) in order to avenge the wrong. The realities of Lampiao's subsequent career are difficult to sort out from the countless poems, legends and songs written in tribute to him. Hobsbawm's investigation of Lampiao leads him to conclude that Lampiao was unlike other cangaceiros such as Antonio Silvino (1875-1944) who are remembered for their good deeds and concern for the poor:

"However, the ballad from which I have taken most of this account does not mention any righting of wrongs (except those done to the band itself), no taking from the rich to give to the poor, no bringing of justice...On the contrary, it records 'horrors': how Lampiao murdered a prisoner though his wife had ransomed him, how he massacred laborers, tortured an old woman who cursed him by making her dance naked with a cactus bush until she died, how he sadistically killed one of his men who had offended him by making him eat a litre of salt, and similar incidents. To be terrifying and pitiless is a more important attribute of this bandit than to be a friend of the poor."

(Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 53)

Lampiao, though a hero, was not a "good" hero. 43 Lampiao lasted almost twenty years, not only because the rugged Northeast offered shelter from government authority but because he was able to exploit political situations and economic conditions to the extent that enabled him "to build up so strong a force as to constitute not merely a potential reinforcement for any great 'colonel' of the backwoods, but a power in his own right" (Hobsbawm, p. 80). Also revealing was the relationship of Lampiao and his band to other organized forces operating in the region at the time. In the mid-1920's, a sizeable guerrilla band which had been operating in the south-central portion of Brazil arrived in the Northeast. Led by Luis Prestes, who was later to become the leader of the Brazilian Communist Party, this well-organized and politically conscious group was seen as a serious threat to the stability of the Northeast by the ruling class. The Federal government turned for assistance to the most powerful religious figure of the area, Father Cicero, "the messiah of Ceara," with the promise of Federal troops to quell any incipient rebellion sparked by the presence of the Prestes group. At Father Cicero's urging the government attempted to enlist Lampiao's assistance by offering his band official pardon for past crimes and offering Lampiao himself official rank as captain as well as ammunition and rifles. Thus legitimized he was expected to pursue and eliminate the real social threat posed by the Prestes column. According to Hobsbawm, Lampiao's enthusiasm for his semi-official military status and his "mission" only waned when he was warned by friends that once he had eliminated Prestes and his group, his own newly-found legitimacy would quickly be revoked. Lampiao decided to take his friends' advice and retreated, mission unaccomplished to the sertao, his old sanctuary, never attempting to either pursue or join in common cause with Luis Prestes.

There have been social bandit types who have developed into activists playing a revolutionary role, Sandor Rozsa of Hungary as well as the Bolshevik Kamo are examples. The cangaceiros generally, and Lampiao specifically, never seemed to evolve out of self-serving banditry and terrorism although such a development is possible. In relation to cinema novo, which is based in such large part on the activities and context of the cangaceiros, it is important (when examining the claim of cinema novo to be a body of revolutionary film) to explore to what extent and in what ways the cinema novo deals critically with the limitations that these social forces represented.

## BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL and ANTONIO DAS MORTES

What distinguishes Glauber Rocha's work is his description of his films as being political and politicizing. Rocha describes his thesis and intention this way:

The cinema is information, didactics, agitation; it has to be culture in the sense of qualitative communication, as only qualitative communication is revolutionary communication and because only this can modify fiction, with drama or with comedy, with satire or epic poetry, is only determined by different subjective or objective historical conditions. In Brazil, for example, it is easier to explain a problem to peasants using the 'cangaceiros' than using the workers. In the same way, it is easier to describe its conditions to the middle-class through a hero like Macunaima than through the 'cangaceiro'.

(From an interview with Rocha,  
"A Propos Political Cinema," 1971-72)



But what does Rocha communicate "qualitatively" in *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL* and *ANTONIO DAS MORTES*? And, using his criteria, is this communication indeed revolutionary? Both films are an amalgam of the social forces of the Northeast and examine the relationships between the religious fanatics, the peasants, the *jacungos* (hired assassins) and the *cangaceiros*. Although not precisely intended as a sequel to *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL*, *ANTONIO DAS MORTES* continues the development of the central character Antonio who is hired gun, bounty hunter or revolutionary, depending on which analysis is made of his actions.

Antonio, as introduced in *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL*, is intended by Rocha to be simultaneously an instrument of oppression and liberation. He is a "gun for hire," and as such his philosophy and morality is a function of the highest bidder for his services, which in *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL* is the church and state and in *ANTONIO DAS MORTES* the coffee and land-owning oligarchy. Hobsbawm points out that traditionally in peasant societies there have been bandits who serve the landlords as well as those who ally with the oppressed. The practice of landlords hiring "deputies" in cases of local peasant rebellion is still extant in the Northeast today, and Antonio is not only a plausible and realistic character but serves an allegorical purpose as well.

Antonio is hired by the Church to destroy a nascent fanatical religious movement and its leader that is seen as representing a threat to the rule of the established clergy. Antonio's journey has its coincidental parallel in the journey of a peasant, his wife and infant who set out on a quest of their own. Manuel, with a life not unlike that of the peasant in *VIDAS SECAS* and *TROPICI*, kills his land-owning boss in an argument over a steer. For Manuel, the act is morally repugnant, and great guilt as well as fear of the authorities drives him to become a follower of the mystic Sebastiao (a character based on such figures as *Conselheiro* of Canudos and *Father Cicero* of Joazeiro). In order to prove his dedication and devotion to Sebastiao, Manuel indulges with all of Sebastiao's followers in ritual ascetic acts such as carrying huge boulders on his head for many miles. Then in an act that had its parallel in a call for a blood-sacrifice made by a backlands prophet in 1838, Sebastiao called for his followers to make the ultimate sacrificial offering to prove their devotion. Manuel offers up his own son. Manuel's wife, outraged at the loss of her child and disillusioned with the prophet, murders him. Manuel and his wife then flee into the sertao. Antonio, who has been tracking the group which remains on the move looking for the "promised land" in spite of the loss of Sebastiao, massacres the entire following in a ritualistic and bloody sequence. In the course of his flight, Manuel encounters an outlaw bandit group led by the *cangaceiro* Corisco (who in real life was a lieutenant of Lampiao and formed a separate band) and becomes peripherally involved with them. Having dispatched the threat to the religious status quo, Antonio now begins to pursue Corisco and his band in order to eliminate the threat to secular authority. Antonio catches up with the outlaws and murders Corisco and all his followers in the same ritualistic way, and Manuel is left to wander alone in the desert. The entire film is linked together by a blind old peasant narrator who relates, in songs and words, the exploits of Sebastiao, Corisco and Antonio. In the final sequence the words in a song refer to the day when the sertao will be the sea and the sea will be the sertao and ends with the words "The earth belongs to Man and not to God or the Devil". Thus, Rocha has assigned Antonio a cathartic role, a man who must purge the Northeast of both the impotent and delusional mysticism and the self-serving lumpen-banditry of the *cangaceiros*. Rocha, according to Ernest Callenbach in an ex-

cellent review of *ANTONIO DAS MORTES* in *Film Quarterly* (winter 1969), has declared that just as imperialists are necessary to dig their own graves, "so Antonio is necessary to bring about the revolution, or at least its spiritual precondition." Antonio frees the peasant from investing his hope for change in the futile and meaningless perturbations of the *beatos* and *cangaceiros* in *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL*. It is this theme, reformulated, to which Rocha returns five years later in *ANTONIO DAS MORTES*.

## The characters and actions symbolize the army's going over to serve the oppressed.

Many of the characters in these two films are taken from the actual history of the Northeast while others are derived from Rocha's personal experience. In *ANTONIO DAS MORTES*, Mata Vaca, the colonel's bodyguard and gunman, is patterned after an individual Rocha claims killed one of his relations when he was a child and who was killed sometime later by one of his cousins in revenge. The character of Antonio is modelled on Jose Rufino, an actual *cangaceiro*-hunter with whom Rocha spent much time. Much of the second half of *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL* is based on what Rufino told him and when Rocha wanted to make *ANTONIO DAS MORTES*, he learned that a new *cangaceiro* had arisen in the Northeast, called Ze Crispin, and that Rufino had gone to catch him because the local police force was unable to do so.

Antonio, like his real-life counterpart Rufino, in the opening sequences of *ANTONIO DAS MORTES*, is sought out by the manager for a despotic landowner, "the Colonel", whose feudal hegemony is threatened by a local uprising of peasants sympathetic to Coiriana and his fellow *cangaceiros*. Whereas in *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL* the *cangaceiros* and the followers of the prophet were two completely distinct, if not antagonistic groups, Coiriana's band includes a girl dressed entirely in white and referred to as "the holy one" as well as a Black man dressed in red who Rocha says symbolizes a Brazilian St. George, a saint who frees the people from oppression. Coiriana is depicted as a somewhat "responsible" social bandit who moreover has a broad-based peasant constituency and who is seen by both peasants and landowner as a potential change-agent. Therefore, when Antonio challenges and kills Coiriana in a ritualistic duel while the peasants and religious figures look on passively, he openly serves the forces of repression. Having killed the bandit leader, Antonio is confronted by the corrupt and greedy landowner and his promiscuous and treacherous wife, and undergoes a change which Rocha describes as "moral and personal." Antonio now sides with the peasants and the remaining religious figures and demands the distribution of food to the poor. In response, the landowner hires another band of killers to eliminate the turncoat Antonio. The film concludes with a multi-layered resolution by blood-letting: the landowner's wife, frustrated by the impotence of the manager in their joint plot against her husband, kills the manager by stabbing him to death; Antonio, joined by the local schoolteacher (intellectual turned activist), emerges victorious from a dramatically-filmed shoot-out with the gang hired by the landowner; and the landowner is ceremoniously dispatched by the Black St. George who runs him through with a lance from horseback.



Needless to say, the characters and their actions have, as Ernest Callenbach points out, "symbolic equivalences." If the "Colonel" represents the feudal landowner whose unswerving dedication to maintaining the status quo without concessions (an idea further emphasized by his being represented as blind in the film), the wife and the manager, Mata Vaca, represent the nationalist bourgeoisie which is divided against itself--between maintaining the institutions of the status quo or overturning them in order to benefit their own class interests. The local schoolteacher, says Rocha, is symbolic of the left-wing intellectual of middle-class background who is "freeing himself from the dust of his bourgeois way of thinking." By joining Antonio in the last battle he represents a "person who must pass, must go from irony and skepticism to action" and thereby "become effective in the struggle for the people." Coiriana, "the holy one" and the Black St. George represent both actual characters of Northeast typology and symbols of "false hope" who are looked up to and passively followed by the peasantry. Finally, Antonio, the pivotal character in the film and the figure upon whom much of the political analysis must rest, symbolizes the army, traditionally the tool of repression and the armed servant and protector of the oligarchy. As Callenbach points out, "If these equivalences are even approximately accurate, the film exemplifies...what is in fact a crucial political phenomenon: the going over of the army from the service of the oppressors to that of the oppressed."

Rocha, in response to Callenbach's analysis and critique of ANTONIO DAS MORTES, which Callenbach compares to the 1938 Errol Flynn version of ROBIN HOOD because "both are fundamentally conservative, and constitute (like most folk art) diversions of thought and feeling from tender political questions," agrees at least partially with Callenbach's description of Antonio as the vested power and potential of the military. Although he maintains that Antonio's change is "profoundly mystical and personal," Rocha makes lengthy references to the progressive role played by the armies of Peru, Bolivia and Colombia.

Assigning the army a progressive role is a questionable proposition. Numerous examples, the most recent being the role of the supposedly "progressive" armed forces of Chile, point in quite an opposite direction. The nature of Antonio's sudden conversion, attributed by Rocha to a change both "moral" and "personal", is also questionable for, as Callenbach points out, "Armies in the real world do not switch their historical roles out of goodness of heart or by some metaphysical impulsion to virtue." If one looks to the film for guidance in understanding Antonio's reversal of allegiance, it appears that Antonio is moved not by the exploitation and suffering of the peasants, but rather is influenced by the virtue and piety of "the holy one," the girl saint. It is she who motivates him to join the peasants and his conversion is just that, a religious change from "sinfulness" to "righteousness."

The principal flaw of most of the cinema novo films stems from their interpretation of two key aspects of the Northeast, social banditry and archaic mysticism. The error in their analysis of these phenomena is two-fold, the former is romanticized while the revolutionary potential of the latter is overlooked. The cangaceiros are held up as heroic figures (even if not always heroes) while the beatos and their peasant followers are depicted as engaged in a futile and self-defeating process totally without potential for change into a more viable and revolutionary movement.

As Hobsbawm points out, social banditry exists in three forms: the archtypal Robin Hood or *noble robber*, the *primitive resistance fighter* such as the haiduk and the *terror-bringing avenger*, typified by the cangaceiros. The noble robber represents the reformist aspects of social banditry (Robin Hood fought against the injustices of the "wicked" John while remaining loyal to the monarchy, the "good" King Richard). While the terror-bringing avenger may become a symbol of the rejection of official authority and values through his anarchic and highly individualistic acts of rebellion, he is unlikely to be concerned with, or act in the interest of, the larger peasant community. The cangaceiro band is not organized to alter the social structure but rather to win for its outlaw members personal rather than class advantages within the existing structure.

Although social banditry and millenarianism are historically congruent, it is only when social banditry aligns itself with a millenarian movement that it can contribute in a significant way to social change. Social banditry alone "has next to no organization or ideology and is totally inadapted to modern social movements" and its strength "is in inverse proportion to that of organized agrarian revolutionism and Socialism or Communism." (Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, p. 23)

Millenarianism, on the other hand, while also existing in a variety of forms, can be a potentially revolutionary movement as it is always directed toward fundamental and radical change of the existing order, unlike the outlaw movements. Hobsbawm points out that the tendency is to dismiss millenarian movements as religious in nature (particularly the chiliastic type) while the millenarianists are frequently equally fervent about and concerned with radical social change. It is true that they most frequently look backwards, to the outmoded social forms of the past for their inspiration, resulting in an essentially reactionary quest. In addition, the millenarianists are frequently not *makers* of revolution, "they expect it to make itself, by divine revelation, by an announcement from on high, by a miracle--they expect it to happen somehow." (Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, p. 59) Hobsbawm describes two other forms of millenarianist movements: the "libertarian communist"

## **The revolutionary potential of the archaic mysticism in the Northeast has been overlooked.**

such as that of the Chilean "red zones" of the 1930's, where the peasant movement attempts to establish small self-governing communities owing allegiance to neither Church or State; the third form being that movement typified by the organizations of Sicilian peasants, still extant, in which the forms of "village anarchist organization" has necessarily evolved into more politicized and politically active units. The Northeast had its own village anarchist organization equivalent in the development of the "peasant leagues" in the early 1960's.



The point of this elaboration is not to deny the particular forms that both millenarianism and social banditry have taken in Brazil, but rather to illustrate that social banditry is rarely a viable political force (and therefore its choice as metaphor is a poor one), and that millenarian movements are not necessarily devoid of revolutionary potential. What cinema novo has done is to exaggerate by the utilization of symbol, metaphor and allegory the revolutionary potential of the cangaceiro and simultaneously hopelessly enmesh the millenarianist movement in mysticism, thereby robbing it of its potential secular and social significance.

There is another no less important criticism that must be made of the cinema novo films. Almost without exception the characterization of the peasantry is that of an inert, hopeless and deadened mass, uninvolved and uncomprehending. It is a cinema of despair and pessimism. In *OS FUZIS*, by Ruy Guerra, when a lone truckdriver rebels against the injustice of a well-stocked food warehouse protected by the army from starving peasants, his call to rebellion and peasant insurrection goes unheeded. He is pursued through the streets of the village by the soldiers and although the peasants do some looting, they take no active part in this rebellion and watch passively as the rebel is tracked down.

In *ANTONIO DAS MORTES* and *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL* the peasants are depicted as a mass which may follow but never lead, blind and mute appendages to a mystic, cangaceiro or an Antonio, never taking an active role in the struggle. One must question why Rocha chooses to present the peasants in this way as this depiction does not reflect historical reality. Recent organizing efforts in the Northeast point in the opposite direction and the powerful Peasant Leagues of the sixties indicate vast potential for active and engaged organization and struggle. The men and women assembled at Canudos with Antonio Conselheiro died fighting, while the followers of Luis Prestes, many of whom were peasants, marched some 21,000 miles, epitomizing the struggle of the poor against the rich. Undoubtedly, many feel hopeless and cynical about the possibilities for change, but little encouragement is to be gained from continually depicting the peasants as hopelessly mired in mysticism, fatalism and resignation.

While this despair and cynicism is most pronounced in the depiction of the peasants, it is not limited to them. Rocha further investigates the psychological dynamics of a character like Antonio in *TERRA EM TRANSE* (1967) which Rocha considers an "intellectual work" and his most important film. Attacked by some groups on the left as a fascist film, *TERRA EM TRANSE* attempts to deal with the problems of the intellectual in post-Goulart Brazil. The central character, Paulo Martins, is ambivalent like Antonio and, according to Rocha, reflects his own doubts and political ambivalence. In *O BRAVO GUERREIRO* by Gustavo Dahl, also set in contemporary Brazil, the central character is Miguel Horta, a radical politician, union official and lawyer who is gradually co-opted by the ruling regime; at the end of the film, in despair Horta holds a gun to his mouth. In some of the non-sertao films of cinema novo, the ambivalence of individuals on the verge of making political commitments is generally treated in a non-critical and ambiguous way. Antonio's own conversion is essentially ambiguous. Cinema novo presents characters who are neither politically coherent nor committed. If this is the actual situation in Brazil (as Rocha and the cinema novo filmmakers see it) it would seem all the more important to offer more than a filmic reflection of the intellectual and ideological confusion.

More than anything else the political weakness and ambiguity of the cinema novo films derives from the double seduction of the desire for a nationalist film movement and the availability of a rich and esoteric folklore upon which to base it. Rocha is more involved and more articulate when dealing with theories of filmmaking and the cultural characteristics of the Northeast than he is when analyzing the political implications or applications of either. When Rocha claims for cinema novo a "revolutionary" role in

## Peasants are seen as a hopeless, uninvolved mass.

Brazil, he is doing so at the *cultural* and not the political level. While the influence of such Hollywood filmmakers as Peckinpah and Hawks is highly evident, there is little question that Rocha's films and cinema novo generally constitute a successful attempt at cultural decolonization. While all reclamations of a national culture constitute a first step in establishing a national identity and consciousness, it does not follow that all cultural expositions have meaningful *political* effects.

Rather than dealing with the limitations and the potential of millenarian movements and social banditry of the cangaceiro type, Rocha has allowed his film form, content and style to be trapped by the irrationality and obscurity that hinders these very movements. Rather than his films and characters rising above and out of the obscurantism of the Northeast mythology, Rocha chooses to descend and finds refuge in its rich but distorting reality. Brazil, like other Latin American countries, has had to labor under the impact of American and European cultural domination. Rocha, like the colonized artist of whom Fanon speaks in *Wretched of the Earth* has forgotten that "The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope" rather than using cultural "instruments...which he wishes to be national, but which [are] strangely reminiscent of exoticism."

"A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature... A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on."

(Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, p. 232)

The development of cinema novo over the past ten years illustrates this problem of orientation. Rocha, in an interview in *Cineaste* (Summer, 1970) describes three phases of cinema novo: the first phase he simply calls "films about the Northeast" (*GANGA ZUMBA*, *VIDAS SECAS*, *OS FUZIS* and *BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL*). He describes the second phase, such films as *O DESAFIO* (*THE CHALLENGE*), *TERRA EM TRANSE* (*LAND IN ANGUISH*) and



O BRAVO GUERREIRO (THE BRAVE WARRIOR) made after the coup d'etat, as films about political power primarily in urban Brazil. The third phase, such films as MACUHAIMA, BRASIL ANO 2,000, O ALIENISTA and ANTONIO DAS MORTES are referred to as "tropicalist." It is this third phase, characterized by a mixed bag of social and political themes against a backdrop of characters, images and contexts not unlike the richness and floridness of the Brazilian jungle, which is "strangely reminiscent" of an artificial "exoticism." These are films in which the rich cultural texture of Brazil has been pushed to the limit and exploited for its own aesthetic ends rather than for its appropriateness as political metaphor.

Ruy Guerra in OS FUZIS manages to avoid the trap into which Rocha has fallen by having an act of de-mystification performed within the film by the victims of mystification themselves. Through most of the film, the peasants are shown to be enmeshed in the mystico-religious system which is part of the Northeast. An old man retells the story of Condiheiro and we see the starving peasants worshipping and pampering a holy ox. After the truck-driver's futile revolt against the army which is guarding a store of food for the landlord, the peasants in a fury of rage and frustration descend on the ox and butcher it, exclaiming that after all "it is only meat." Guy Guerra is modest in his political claims for his film and understands, probably more clearly than Rocha, the translation of his convictions and intentions into film form:

"My films have no intentional political purposes, no recommendations, no solution. I am not interested in industrialization nor the agrarian problem. I only wanted to illustrate the social reality of the northeast of Brazil, the cultural relations between the traditions, the religious fanaticism-fatalism and mysticism... It is not necessary to understand everything, but it is enough to incite thinking, and that one reflect about these problems after having seen the film."

(Cine Al Dia, "Realidad Y Alternativa" (April 1968))

This simple statement, "It is only meat," begins to point in the direction of demythologizing and intervening in the vicious cycle which is at the root of traditional mysticism and transforms it into secular rationalism, whereas Rocha places the form and content of his films squarely within this arcane system.

The political and economic hegemony enjoyed by the sugar and coffee barons of the Northeast during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been replaced by the urban bourgeoisie and high investment capital of the industrialized centers of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. With this shift of wealth and power from the countryside to the cities, a large industrial working class has developed. If, as Rocha claims, the cangaceiros are utilized by cinema novo filmmakers to relate to the peasant consciousness and the tropicalist characters serve to relate to the consciousness of Brazil's urban middle-class, when and how do the cinema novo filmmakers direct their attention to the working class? While it seems a fatal omission to ignore the urban working class, granting Rocha the right to direct his attention where he wishes, are there not cultural or historical events involving the peasantry that are better suited for political explication and development of consciousness than tales of the cangaceiros and santos? Cinema novo completely ignores the nascent revolutionary developments which occurred throughout the Northeast from 1924 through the 1960's. In 1924, a series of rebellions of young army officers broke out in Sao Paulo. A young army captain, Luis Prestes, began his famous march at this

time, covering some 21,600 miles throughout the vast interior regions attempting to incite the rural masses to revolt. In 1935, the Communist Party launched an armed rebellion, the Pernambuco "putsch", the first and only time that a Communist Party bound to the Moscow line ever engaged in violent revolution in Latin America. Their call was for "Bread, Land and Liberty for the People." In the mid-1940's, the Communist Party organized (and then quickly disbanded) the original Peasant Leagues. In the mid-1950's, Francisco Juliao began his association with the New Peasant Leagues which were to attract large numbers of organized peasants and national attention. In the decade from 1950 to 1960, the Peasant Leagues were only one of a number of rural union organizations and there were numerous strikes

## **Brazil has a seductive and rich folklore upon which to base a nationalist film movement.**

and demonstrations which the landlords fought bitterly and bloodily.

The above is hardly an exhaustive list of all the struggles engaged in by the peasants of the Northeast. One must ask why Rocha and the cinema novo filmmakers have chosen to concentrate on the "romantic" and mystical elements of Northeast history when there are so many vital and progressive historical movements. With the exception of GANGA ZUMBA by Carlos Diques, concerning the Republic of Palmares set up in the backlands by rebellious and runaway slaves during the seventeenth century, few other cinema novo films use successful or constructive historical events or personages for their subject.

While the people of Brazil are presented with one aspect of their culture and history in the cinema novo films, they will not find any clearly defined alternative to sporadic and futile individual rebellions against the violent and repressive conditions under which they currently live. Instead, cinema novo turns their attention backward and inward to archaic political and social forces which are by their very nature incapable of producing meaningful social change. Callenbach, in summarizing ANTONIO DAS MORTES, states it clearly:

By formulating the antagonism between oppressors and oppressed in a symbolic and static way, rather than in a process-oriented material way, the film preserves and continues the malaise of Latin American political life. The way to demystify a feudal system is not to play elegant symbolic games, but to show concretely how the system works. Only truth is revolutionary, Gramsci tells us, Antonio is a false hope; his drama is beside the point. It is portentously said of Antonio Das Mortes that he prayed in ten churches, yet had no patron saint--at least until he found "the holy one". Maybe he should have tried Marx. (Callenbach, "Comparative Anatomy of Folk-Myth Films: Robin Hood and Antonio Das Mortes", *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1969), p. 47.





(Os Fuzis)

**BRAZIL** 1964  
**Director** RUY GUERRA  
**Script** RUY GUERRA  
**Camera** RICARDO ARONOVICH  
**Music** MOACYR SANTOS  
**Cast includes** Atila Iorio  
 Nelson Xavier, Maria Gladys  
**A Copacabana/Embracine/Daga Films Production**  
**110 Mins** B & W 35mm  
**English Sub-Titles**

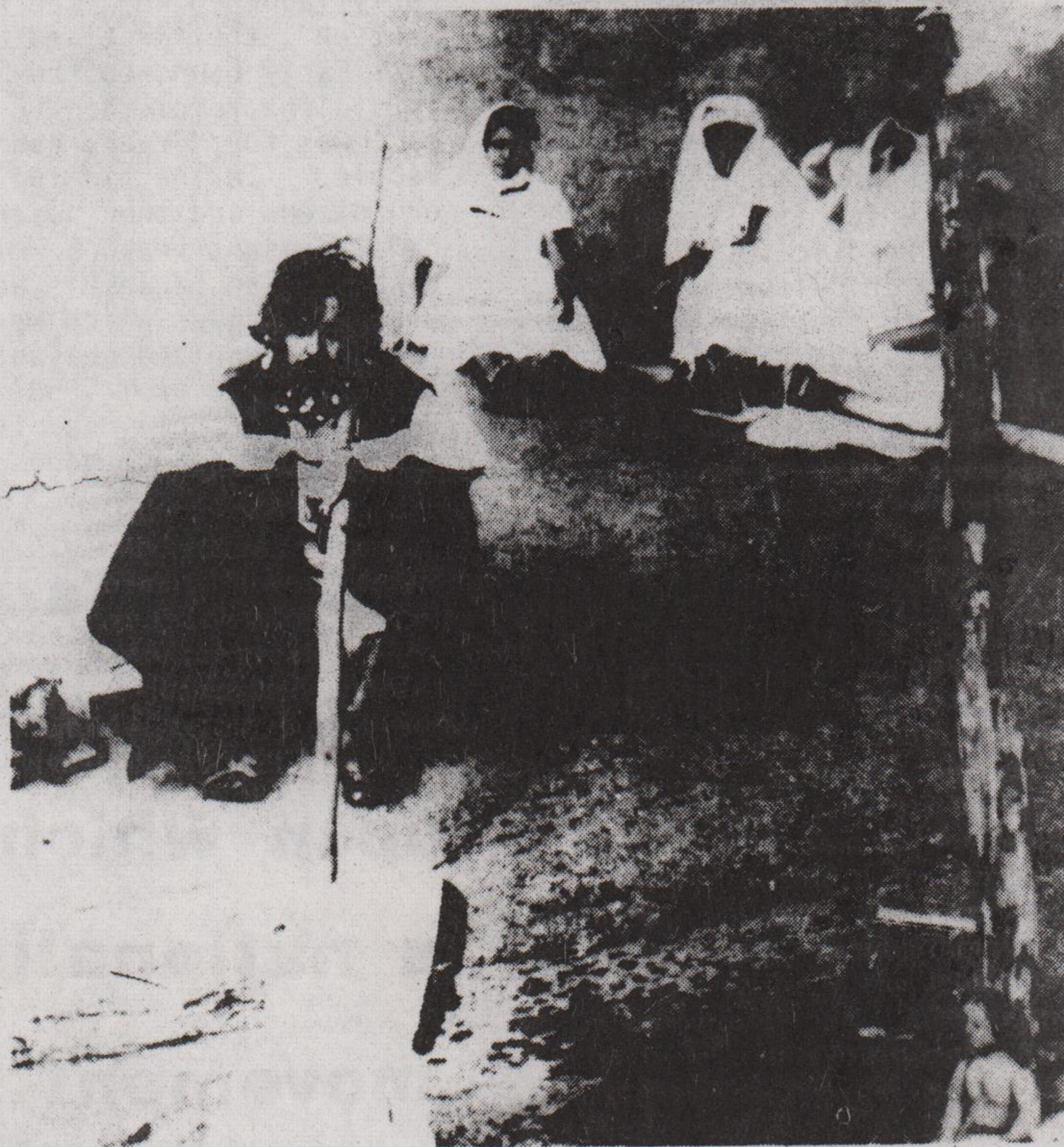
**WINNER OF A "SILVER BEAR" AT THE 1964 BERLIN FESTIVAL.**

In the North-East of Brazil, in 1963, a group of peasants, harangued by a violent "beato", follow a sacred ox in the belief that it will bring rain. Soldiers are sent from the coast to the town of Milagres to protect the Mayor's produce from the starving people. One of them, Mario, falls in love with a local girl; another, Pedro, kills a peasant in a thoughtless accident. Gaúcho, a lorry driver, one-time soldier and friend of Mario, goaded by the apathy of the peasants, tries to prevent the food being taken away and is shot down by the soldiers. The peasants kill the ox and eat the meat.

OS FUZIS is a major work in any language — Andre Delvaux said of it, 'it is one of the most mature works I have ever seen. I would be tempted to say that it is Eisenstein's best film' — but it is particularly important because, together with Rocha's BLACK GOD, WHITE DEVIL and Dos Santos' VIDAS SECAS, it introduced Cinema Novo to the outside world. (Guerra is in fact credited with making the first Cinema Novo film, OS CAFAJESTES (1962) What distinguishes OS FUZIS — less a story about events than a documentary about hunger, drought, the impoverished land of North-Eastern Brazil and the twin oppressors, mysticism and armed force — is its structure: various aspects of North-Eastern life are introduced as if at random and then gradually drawn together towards the film's climax — the failure of Gaúcho's (the outsider's) revolutionary act, and the much more significant revolutionary act of the peasants, who defy religious taboo, turn on their useless god-figure and eat it. Events are intensified by their dual relationship to fact and to mythology, and even the pace, alternatively slow and brooding, and exploding with violence, reflect the Brazilian character.

'At the beginning what interested me was posing the problem of a whole region, of the state of mind of the inhabitants, which was typical of the region, but which they were not aware of. First I had to present the region in a very documentary fashion, pick out the human groups, for collective mentalities don't preclude the existence of profound divergences, and expose the myths of each of these groups. I did not want to do this in a linear, or a static or a definitive way. People and groups change and I wanted to show this in an organic way, not imposed artificially by some preconceived idea

# THE GUNS



that I might have had of this evolution. I was equally interested in the profoundly absurd aspects of the situation. Nothing that the people could have done — the villagers, the soldiers, the lorry driver — could have really altered anything. Their acts, no matter how sincere or how excessive, do not alter the basic premises of the problem. If, at the end, the villagers had helped themselves to the food, it wouldn't have made much difference to their material future, though it would have revealed a new state of mind... but then that would be another film'.

'The story of OS FUZIS, is a little bit what happened, though on a much larger scale, at Canudos. This was an independent republic, set up at the beginning of the century, where the beggars and the poor gathered together around a sort of spiritual guide, the Condiheiro. They established laws, a way of life, an autonomy. The republic of Canudos became such a nuisance that the government sent several expeditions to destroy it. Each time the inhabitants refused to surrender, resisted, and decimated several expeditions, even one led by the most famous General of the country, Moreira Cesar. The soldiers were defeated by people armed with axes and knives. Finally, they were massacred by a fourth expedition of 1800 men. An essay about this episode of Brazilian history inspired me. My film is a sort of reduced Canudos. I have tried to express the whole superstitious and fanatical context of North-East Brazil, the whole aspect of mystical domination. The only outcome that the people of this region can imagine is a mystical one — the recourse to God. And this can take for them the most diverse, absurd and contradictory forms. The ox is something that happened in about 1924. That ox was killed by

soldiers. The myth of this animal had taken such a hold over the villagers that another very influential priest took umbrage and got the government to agree to kill it... so the whole film is connected with a series of Brazilian traditions.'

Ruy Guerra interviewed in  
CAHIERS DU CINEMA

'A tough, violent, implacable, Brazilian film that makes no concessions, but its human, political, and aesthetic resonances touch us profoundly despite the Marxist character of its vision of the world. A title, a construction, a final ceremony proper to a Western. "My film," says Guerra, "is constructed around a Western structure. A character (the gaúcho) with his past, a meeting and a final duel results in a savage massacre. And, together with this, there is an absence of barriers between good and evil...'

Ruy Guerra  
LE MONDE

'A script and a realism which come from documentaries and war films. Nevertheless OS FUZIS is much

more than a Western, a documentary or a war film. Ruy Guerra has blown up the traditional frontiers, and the union of elements which are often arbitrarily dissociated but which here are harmoniously reunited, gives this work an indisputably original style. It is a work that is in its essence tragic since it questions man's behaviour when faced by death. It is a contemporary work since this confrontation has its origins in one of the lands where today people still die of hunger.'

Michel Esteve  
CINEFORUM No. 78

'The important point about OS FUZIS is that none of the characters is in a position to solve the problem he is in. Illiteracy, ignorance, lethargy, due mainly to working conditions and the scarcity of food, the tyranny of tradition, religious fanaticism, mysticism, all this prevents the man from the Brazilian North East from grasping the totality of his condition. Furthermore in order for any revolt to take hold, the man who wages it must come directly from the community in which he is acting — which is not the case with Gaúcho, an outsider in the farming community of Milagres.'

IMAGE ET SON

'His film offers no solutions; but telling the truth, the whole truth, is in itself a sufficiently revolutionary act... a perfect example of critical realism, with an almost musical beauty of structure — not so much opera as cantata — OS FUZIS offers also the expression of a manic lyricism, a savage cruelty, where the appetite to live clashes with harsh necessity.'

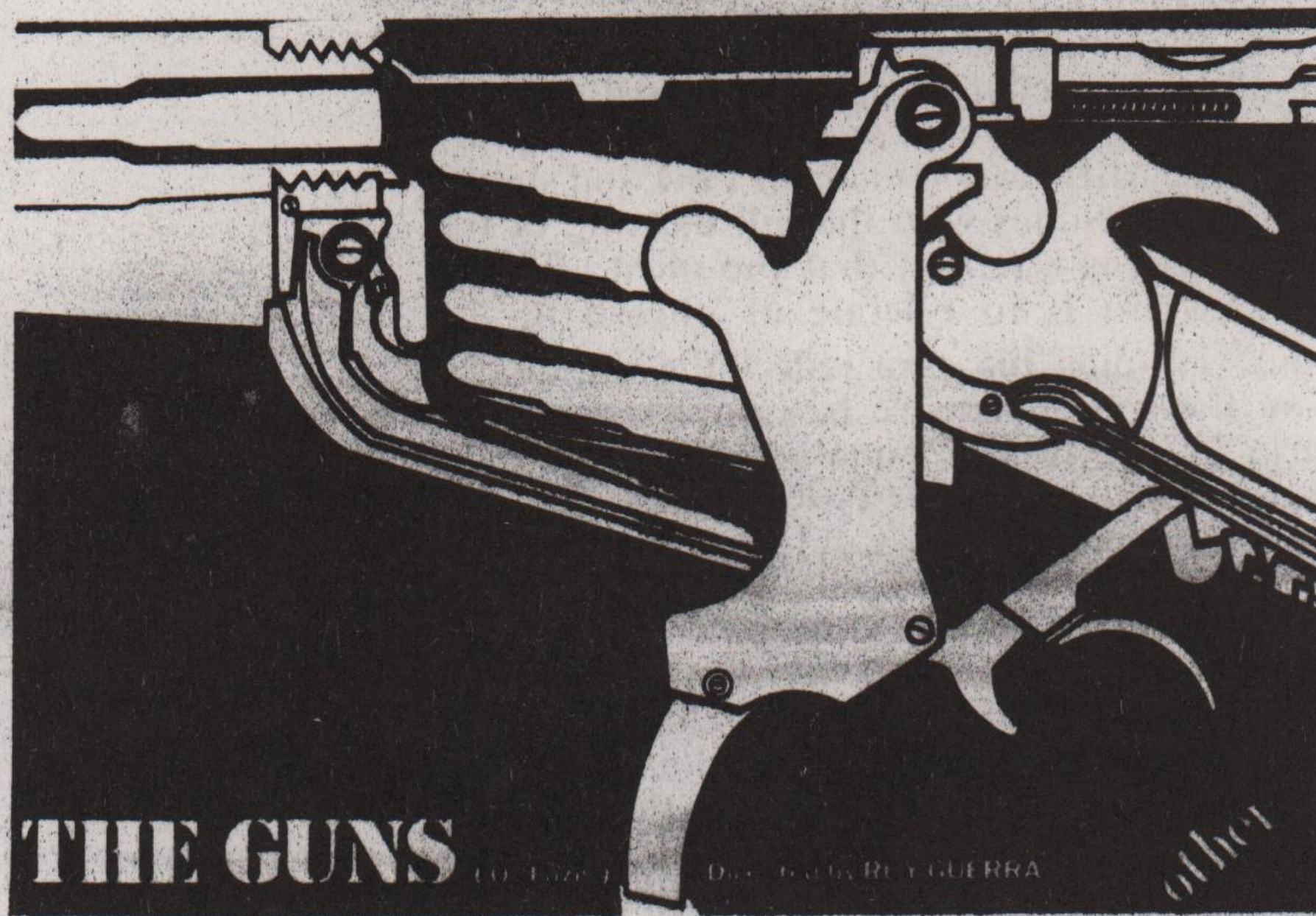
Michel Ciment  
POSITIF

'At times Guerra shrieks rather than cries out, certain images are over-emphasised, some sequences seem over-long... and the mystical ecstatic recitativ risks becoming tedious. The more one shrieks, the less attractive the sound, and the film could perhaps have benefited from cutting. But yet, this shaking eloquence, even if it smacks of melodrama, this hysteria, controlled or exploding, gives the work its tone. These excesses are the expression of the agonies of heat and unbearable suffering. Some things just can't be talked about with calm and moderation.'

Jacques Bory  
NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR







# THE GUNS

(Os Fuzis)

**BRAZIL** 1964

**Director** RUY GUERRA

**Script** RUY GUERRA

**Camera** RICARDO ARONOVICH

**Music** MOACYR SANTOS

**Cast includes** Atila Iorio

Nelson Xavier, Maria Gladys

A Copacabana/Embracine/Daga Films

Production

**110 Mins** **B & W** **35mm**

English Sub-Titles

**WINNER OF A "SILVER BEAR"**

**AT THE 1964 BERLIN FESTIVAL.**

**FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER 7.30**



Brazil, 1963

Director: Ruy Guerra

*Cert*—(not yet issued). *dist*—The Other Cinema. *p.c*—Copacabana Films / Embracing/Daga Films. *p*—Jarbas Barbosa. *sc*—Ruy Guerra. *story*—Ruy Guerra, Miguel Torres, Pierre Pelegri, Démosthène Theokary, Philippe Dumarcay. *ph*—Ricardo Aronovich. *ed*—Ruy Guerra, Raimundo Higino. *a.d*—(none). *m*—Moscir Santos. *l.p*—Atila Iório (*Gaúcho*), Nelson Xavier (*Mário*), Maria Gladys (*Luisa*), Leonides Bayer (*Sergeant*), Hugo Carvana (*Ze*), Mauricio Loyola (*Holy Man*), Ivan Candido, Paulo César. 9,900 ft. 110 mins. *Subtitles*.


Encouraged by the words of a holy man, the peasants of North East Brazil follow a sacred ox in the belief that it will bring rain. Soldiers are sent to the nearby town of Milagres to protect the Mayor's food supply from the starving people. One of the soldiers, Mário, falls in love with a local girl, Luisa, but her mistrust of the troops inhibits her from returning his love. When another soldier, Pedro, kills a peasant in a thoughtless accident with a rifle, the matter is quickly hushed up. On the day of the food lorry's departure, Gaúcho, a lorry driver and ex-soldier, is enraged by the apathy of the peasants in the face of deprivation and, seizing a gun, opens fire on the troops. He is pursued and shot, and the lorry moves away. Meanwhile, in defiance of the holy man, the peasants kill the sacred ox, and share and devour its meat.

"It is not a film which represents any more what is happening in post-coup Brazil" was the disarming verdict of Maria Gladys, one of the stars of *Os Fuzis*, in a recent interview. Faced with the diminishing topicality of *cinema novo*, the time has perhaps come when the films of Guerra, dos Santos and Glauber Rocha must be judged by other criteria than their effectiveness as 'guerrilla films', as weapons in the revolutionary struggle. *Cinema novo* is ten years old and *Os Fuzis* is one of its earlier works, made in 1964 and shown to audiences in Europe and the States with the full blessing of the Brazilian government. While it is a truism that the most effective method of dealing with protest is to tolerate or absorb it, the regime's indifference must in some measure reflect the impotence of the protest. (Compare the comprehensive ban on screenings of *The Hour of the Furnaces* in Argentina.) Equally—and more constructively—one could argue that *Os Fuzis* is less a film for one revolutionary moment than a timelessly valid statement about political oppression, an allegory of the manipulation of the people both by military force and by the 'intellectual violence' of indoctrination and religious dogmatism. The power of the film lies indeed in its objectivity. Far from being urged to admire or champion the peasants, we are, like Gaúcho, enraged by their religious credulity and their apathy in the face of persecution, while the soldiers emerge, no less than the townspeople, as the corrupted victims of a system. Side by side with the film's dispassionate characterisation goes a sense of numbing fatalism. As Guerra has said, "Nothing that the people could have done could have really altered anything", and the result in dramatic terms is a film which is at once curiously static (barring Gaúcho's death, all that 'happens' in the main plot is the soldiers' successful accomplishment of their mission) and yet instinct with every kind of hidden violence. The violence pervades Guerra's direction in the restless mobility of his staging (characters moving in and out of frame in a Janesó-like perpetual motion), in the characters' 'games' (the deceptively innocent contest between Gaúcho and the sergeant to see who can assemble and load a rifle the quicker), in the strident, despotic tones of the holy man as he chants Biblical comfort to the starving people. The uneasy co-existence of the soldiers and the townspeople is expressed metaphorically in the relationship between Mario and the girl: the lovers demonstrate at once a passionate impulse to belong together in defiance of the crisis igniting around them, and also a deeply-instilled mistrust stemming from the knowledge that they are political enemies. This emotional ambivalence is conveyed in an astonishing sequence in which, leaving the room where the old peasant, shot by one of the soldiers, lies dead, the two flee from wall to wall down a darkened street, and exchange a series of tortured, panting embraces from which first one, then the other, struggles to break free. Ultimately, the film suggests a complete impasse. There is no profit from Gaúcho's suicidal gesture of defiance (condemned by Guerra as an act of "moral conscience, not revolutionary consciousness"), while the departure of the soldiers erases both Mario's love affair and Pedro's casual murder of the peasant. If a guarded optimism is to be seen in the film, it is in the story that frames the central plot, a bitter parable of religious oppression which culminates in the film's one cleanly iconoclastic act—the killing and eating of the sacred ox. Threatened originally by the film's producer with the cutting of this sub-plot (since it spoiled what would otherwise have been "a straight action movie"), Guerra later commented: "The film would have looked quite beautiful but it wouldn't have made sense to me any more". The key to the revolutionary future, the film implies, lies first in a change of consciousness, only later in a show of force; and the people's climactic act of blasphemy suggests just where that change might begin.



To remove a tablet simply press the bubble firmly with your thumb and push the tablet through.

**BLOOD OF THE CONDOR**



On the... continue to take... pack is finished. Leave... next 3-week pack. Now you... just 3 weeks on, 1 week off. Your... the tablet-free week, which you... once on a calendar. Your protection... week you are without tablets... regularly at a set time such as before... you miss a tablet, take it as soon as you... continue as before. It is advisable to take... tions during the first two weeks of your... to work... whether or... more than one period... If anything unusual... comfort occurs at first, such as... will soon disappear and you... to the comfort of painless peri... menstrual stress. If you are in... To be taken under medical supervision.

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are extensively involved in medical research to ensure that... of their products are of the highest possible standards. It has been selected by your doctor... research. It has been selected by your doctor... as the one best suited to your individual...

**A BOLIVIAN FILM BY JORGE SANJINES**

# THE BLOOD OF THE CONDOR

(Yawar Mallku)		
BOLIVIA	1969	
Director	JORGE SANJINES	
Producer	RICARDO RADA	
Camera	ANTONIO EGUINO	
Screenplay	JORGE SANJINES and OSCAR SORIA	
Music	ALBERTO VILALPANDO ALFREDO DOMINGUEZ GREGORIO YANA IGNACIO QUISPE	
Cast includes	Marcelino Yanahuaya Benedicta Mendoza Huanca Vicente Salinas and the population of the Kaata rural community	
74 minutes	B&W	16mm
English subtitles		

FRIDAY 14 OCTOBER 7.30



# BLOOD OF THE CONDOR



Produced by Ukamau Ltd.; directed by Jorge Sanjines; screenplay by Oscar Soria and Jorge Sanjines; photographed by Antonio Eguino. With Marcelino Yanahuaya, Vicente Salinas, Benedicta Huanca and the population of the Kaata rural community. Distributed by Third World Cinema Group (P.O. Box 3234, NY, NY 10001).

The following review originally appeared in the French publication, *Africasia*.

For at least a year now, the Bolivian people have been restless. If the outcome of the political changes going on still remains doubtful, the present condition of Bolivian workers and peasants is shockingly clear.

Jorge Sanjines' *BLOOD OF THE CONDOR* (titled *YAWAR MALLKU* in the Quechua dialect in which it was originally filmed) sheds a harsh light on the fate of the Indians who constitute an overwhelming majority (65%) of the Bolivian population. The Indian languages are not taught in the schools nor are they even officially recognized -- and the Indians themselves remain the object of a violent racism on the part of a ruling minority which considers itself to be completely 'white' (while, in actuality, it is largely *mestizo*).

The film achieved notoriety even before it was shown publicly in Bolivia. Its banning by government censors set in motion a press campaign and street manifestations of so violent a nature that the authorities finally relented and allowed it to be released. Since its official opening, more than 320,000 Bolivians have seen *BLOOD OF THE CONDOR* -- a record attendance for any film ever shown in that nation.

Filmed under extremely difficult conditions (students, technicians, workers and peasants contributed some of the necessary funds), *BLOOD OF THE CONDOR* paints a vivid fresco of the day-to-day life and customs of the Quechua Indians.

For those who do not know Latin America, certain sequences in the film are sure to appear excessive and exaggerated -- as well as 'folklore-ish' in the most pejorative sense. Yet, the repercussions the film has brought about in Bolivia would seem to illustrate just the opposite -- that, indeed, it reflects only too well the national reality at the present moment.

With great power, the film shows the premeditated extermination of the Quechua Indians by a crew of American doctors who sterilize women members of the tribe when they come to a recently set up modern maternity hospital. Gradually, the Indians themselves realize what is happening. The men of the village, angry and disgusted, march upon the hospital; they have decided to castrate the *gringos*. In the scenes which follow, the silent dignity of the Indians contrasts greatly with the lachrymose explanations furnished by the American specialists. In the end, the Indians are made to pay for their defiant gesture with their own blood: the leaders of the Quechua community are executed in a ravine. Only one young man, Ignazio, manages to escape. His wife brings him secretly to the big city, hoping to get medical help for his wounds there.

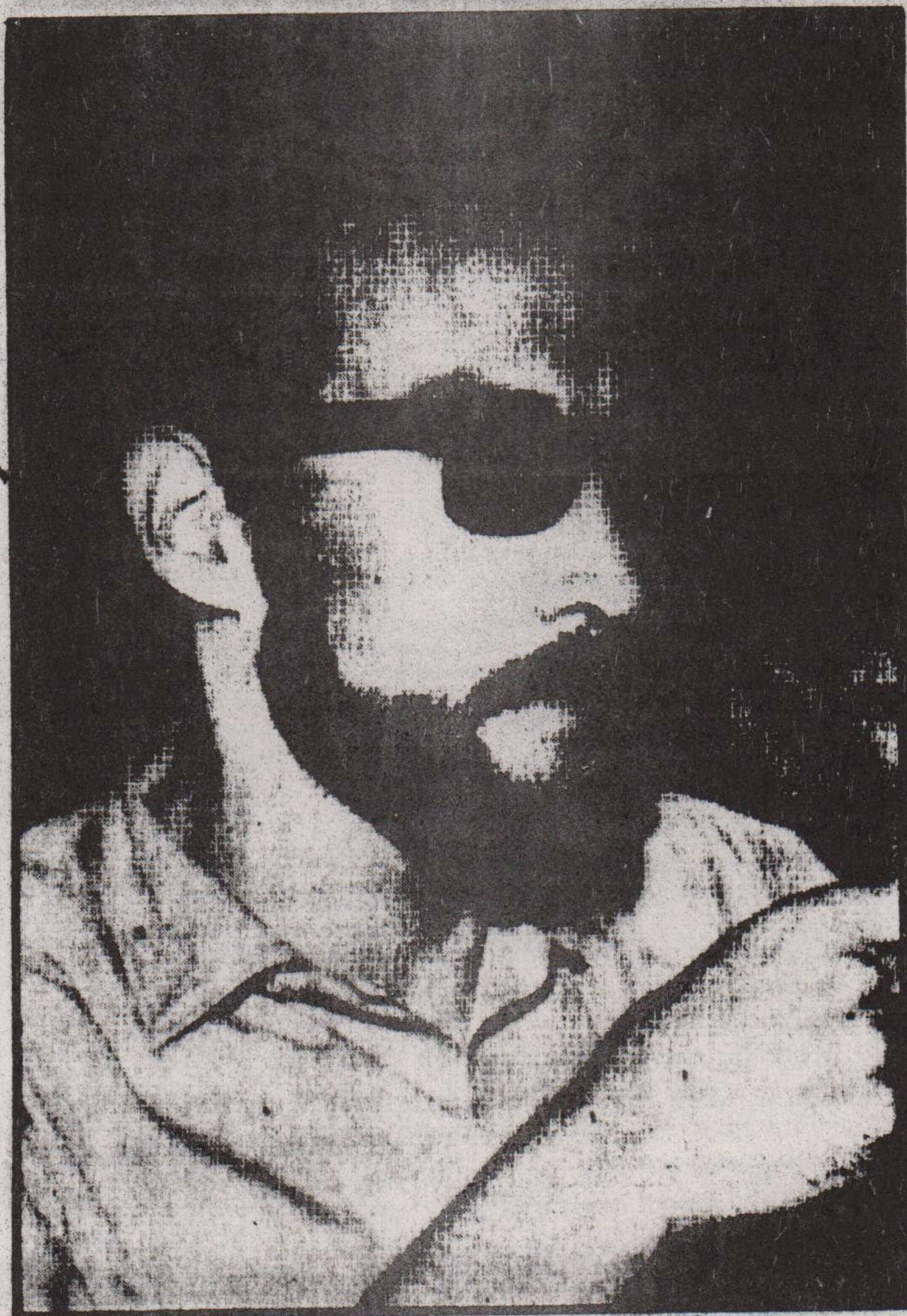
The contrast between the Indians' life in the *altiplanos* (highlands) and the lives of workers in a big Bolivian city is truly shocking. One of the most remarkable aspects of the film is how powerfully Sanjines has described the confrontation between these two disparate worlds, completely isolated from each other. In a moving sequence, Ignazio's brother searches through the streets vainly trying to drum up the money necessary to buy blood plasma that will save Ignazio. This foredoomed pilgrimage represents a coming of age, a slow growth of awareness within Ignazio's brother who had left the Indian village to live in the city, denying his Indian origins because he thought that by doing so he would go further in the world. At the end, almost inevitably, Ignazio dies..., but his brother puts on the traditional costume of the Quechua peasant once more and returns with his sister-in-law to the village high in the mountains. The last shot of the film -- of weapons raised high by dozens of hands -- assures us that the struggle will continue.

Used as carefully and knowingly as it is in this film, the camera truly becomes a weapon. Admittedly, one film cannot radically change the harsh realities of Bolivian life -- but it bears witness, at least, to a struggle being waged on many fronts.

Gibril Balde



## a talk with jorge sanjines



The government may not admit it, but 35-year-old Jorge Sanjines is Bolivia's one-man film industry. After a decade of short films and documentaries, Sanjines founded the nation's Institute of Cinematography -- only to find himself outsted from the institute upon completion of his first feature film, *UKAMAU*, which was judged "too negative" by the authorities. Sanjines' discussion of *BLOOD OF THE CONDOR*, his second feature, originally appeared in *Les Nouvelles Litteraires*.

It was in a Bolivian daily newspaper that I first learned about the sterilization of peasants. A journalist wrote that North American members of the Peace Corps were doing such things to Indian women in a maternity hospital situated in the mountains not far from Lake Titicaca. What was even more frightening, the doctors were doing it underhandedly, without informing their patients first -- and for a long while the Indians believed they were cursed. The news finally broke over a Catholic radio station in La Paz; of course the government denied it -- and the Peace Corps went to great lengths to defend itself against the accusations. When I tried to see the journalist who had first revealed the story, I was told he was away on a trip. Later I learned he was frightened of meeting me, after having received some anonymous and very threatening letters. Finally, on my own, I did some investigating. I met doctors and gynecologists who had actually treated some of the Quechua women. They agreed that these women had been sterilized in the American clinic without their knowledge or consent.

This affair poses some delicate problems, I'll admit, in many different spheres. First, the one

concerning the individual himself -- who should determine whether another human being should be used, all unknowingly, as a guinea pig? Second, there are the demographic and political ramifications. I realize that a program of birth control is necessary in many Third World countries -- on the condition that it be accompanied by education of the people involved as to its significance. But it so happens that Bolivia is not an over-populated land, with only four inhabitants per square kilometer and an infant mortality rate of over 40%. Therefore, sterilizing these women is a way of methodically stamping out the Quechua people. And the 'Yankees' know it even better than we do -- after all, they've studied our land and its population long enough, with their bands of sociologists, anthropologists and economists.

I purposefully set my two feature-length films in Indian peasant communities because Bolivian life should be determined by this Indian majority which represents over 65% of the present population. It's the minority of whites and *mestizos* who, by monopolizing all of the power, are cutting Bolivia off from its true cultural identity. This minority slavishly follows the policies and ideas of the United States. That's why in *BLOOD OF THE CONDOR* the wife of the city doctor speaks to her own children in English: this is currently the case in the cities, where English is obligatory in all schools right from the elementary grades and where a family's supreme ambition is to send its children to the U.S. to finish their studies. And yet there are good universities all over Latin America!

Two things interested me when I started this film: attacking this ruling group who live far removed from their own national roots -- and then, above all, making people conscious of the reality surrounding them which their own warped education or bourgeois milieu prevent them from seeing. I was especially interested in getting this across to the young, to the students themselves.

*BLOOD OF THE CONDOR* might seem awkward in places, at times too simplistic for some sophisticated European audiences. Well, at this stage, esthetic questions don't count very much for me. Aside from the fact that the film certainly suffered technically due to a lack of adequate shooting time and not enough money (and it also posed great problems in dubbing and post-synchronization since it was done mostly in the Quechua language), I believe that what matters most is getting my message across to the Bolivian masses. The Indian audience, for example -- still almost entirely innocent of cinema -- is only now discovering films like *UKAMAU* and *BLOOD OF THE CONDOR*; and thus the question of influences, of script originality, of technical perfection, so important to moviegoers in Europe, is not very important to them. They're interested in the story, in the images themselves. Many of them have returned to see my films more than once.

Showing it before an audience composed exclusively of Indians, we even tried an altogether different approach. We had a narrator who first recounted the story by showing photographs of the various characters. This is a tradition dating all the way back to the Incas and it still exists today -- there are still storytellers who journey from village to village. Then, afterwards, we discussed the story with the audience -- and, finally, showed the film. It's a question of educating people unused to seeing movies at the same time as attempting to create a national cinema. And there seems to be so little time...



## blood of the condor and the rats



The following editorial appeared in *Presencia*, the most important daily newspaper in Bolivia, on July 10, 1969.

Once again the problem of birth control imposed upon our people without its knowledge or consent is confronting us in a most dramatic way.

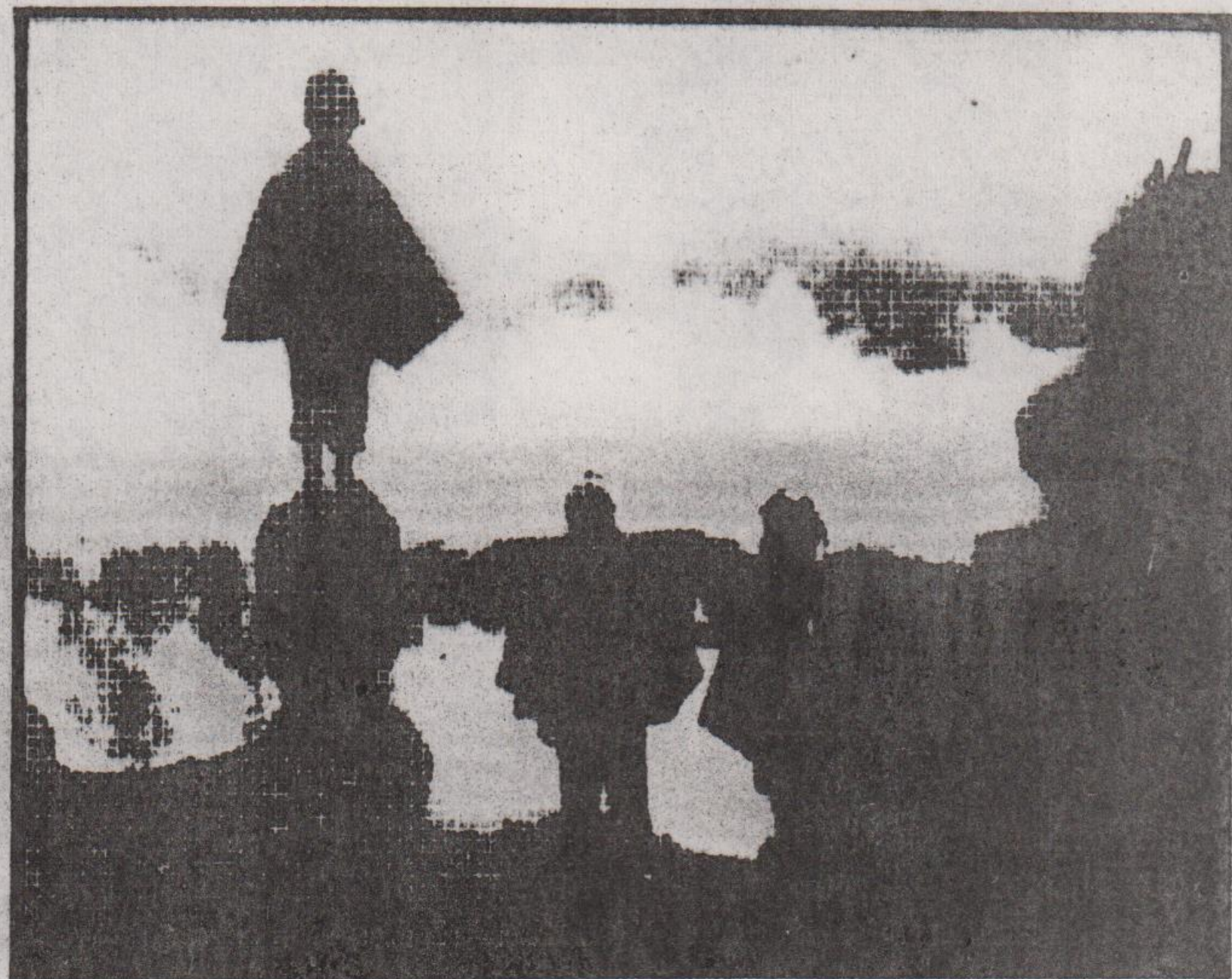
We are being judged by foreigners; these foreigners are importing remedies and imposing them on us: sometimes hypocritically, sometimes sincerely, but they always impose them on us.

When Lyndon Johnson declared that it would be better to spend five dollars on birth control than a hundred dollars on development programs, or when Robert MacNamara insisted that the World Bank should cut its credit so as to give more to those countries practicing birth control, these are only foreign-direction solutions and erroneous ones. It is very simple to demand that a majority be deprived of having children so that a minority can enjoy in abundance what is being refused to this majority.

Yet the question is not that of an easy solution but of what is necessary. And our concern is not birth control primarily, but the foundation of a just social structure, fair trade conditions and equality of treatment regarding prices for both raw materials and manufactured goods. To answer our request with spirals and sterilization shows that our demand for justice is met only with naive answers and cynical policies.

The peasants and workers realize that they are not advancing towards the prosperity and justice they seek by refraining from having children. But they do realize that they are thereby increasing the prosperity of the others. The movie *BLOOD OF THE CONDOR* faces the problem realistically and shows the repulsion that this policy arouses in Latin America: the message of the film is vivid and it cuts deep. The accusation is clear and sharp and it arrives shortly after it was demonstrated by documents and publications that the Peace Corps was secretly sterilizing the wives of peasants and miners in various regions of Bolivia.

The problem of demographic explosion is serious in some areas. But it is a demographic explosion of human beings and it should be treated as such --



not as a scientific experiment with rats in a laboratory designed to evade the other problem, the basic, essential and number one: that of justice to eliminate internal colonialism and external neo-colonialism. Both are attempting to preserve the great Latin American masses in the same conditions as they keep rats.

*BLOOD OF THE CONDOR* shows with great expressive quality to what degree we shall not let ourselves be treated as laboratory rats. On this point as well as on others, the film is representing us in the world -- it is representing millions of Latin Americans.

## cinema and revolution

by Jorge Sanjines

Never has it been as important in our countries to fight confusion; never has it been so urgent to say things clearly because never has time for acting or perishing been so short. From this urgent and vital necessity comes forth a new cinema in the Third World: revolutionary cinema, which by definition proposes to create a consciousness for liberation.

To create a consciousness for liberation is an enormous and difficult task which demands renunciation and responsibility.

It is now, in these decisive years for men and for the history of our continent, the most important, most vital task, because it is a matter of surviving not merely as peoples, but as cultural beings, as non-depersonalized human groups. This struggle proposes not just to illustrate misery -- because that is of no interest to the peoples who know it well and suffer it in their daily lives -- but to denounce the structures of exploitation and power which cause this misery. This denunciation which must single out the guilty ones, explain the mechanisms involved, and identify the enemy -- an abstract entity to the majority of the exploited -- will find a new audience eager to know the truth.

The exposure of truth is the most revolutionary cultural action. Ayme Cesaire has said: "The most



important cultural act is revolution." Obviously there is identity because revolution is truth.

The danger which threatens those dispossessed of land is not only death by inanition, but death of their identity, and it is preferable to disappear physically than to extinguish culturally, spiritually. Therefore, the struggle for liberation is a struggle not only for liberty, but also one that seeks to find and assert the existence of these oppressed peoples. It proposes to fight the different forms of alienation and to seek the definition of its very cultural values.

To create a consciousness for liberation involves a struggle against several enemies of the people; against several aspects of an effort to deform it; aspects which assemble to corrupt the popular mind and to exploit it. Nevertheless, all of them as a whole, the national sepoys and the foreign consortia, obey the common enemy; they have the same origin: Imperialism.

Given the power, experience, shrewdness and covetousness of this enemy, one must conclude that there is no time, neither for idle pursuits of estheticism, nor for personal realization. There remains only the necessary time to be responsible and consistent. We must free ourselves of many intellectual prejudices and face reality and history with more humility because what matters today is not the creator or the work, as isolated results. These are only important in relation to their usefulness to the cause of liberation.

We must, therefore, serve as the stone which breaks silence, as the bullet which starts the battle. "Poetry is not a goal in itself. Among us, poetry is a tool to transform the world. It does not seek a posterity of admirers; it seeks a future in which once consummated, this poetry will cease being what it is today." (Gabriel Celaya) And it isn't hard to accept -- because it isn't utopia -- that once the battle is won and the people are free, each poet, each creator and -- why not say

it -- each man, will have a new responsibility: that of creating freely and indefinitely. Then there will be time and place to talk about life; today there only remains time to denounce death. Because Imperialism feeds on death; Imperialism only destroys.

The revolutionary cinema is, therefore, a cinema at war against Imperialism. This kind of filmmaking excludes profit, 'star complex', competition. Those who work for profit, those who feed their 'star complex', or promote competition are enemies. Communication with the people is the objective of this cinema and of this struggle. To attain that communication, it must reject all outlines and formulas of commercial and alienated cinema, which because of its structure of concessions encourages escape and deforms the public mentality. Therefore, this cinema which, contrary to the commercial one, proposes to tell the truth, must search for another language capable of recovering the spectator while following, in the process, his inner rhythms, as well as the mental structures and cultural characteristics of each people.

The work of revolutionary cinema must not limit itself to denouncing, or to the appeal for reflection; it must be a summons for action. It must appeal to our peoples' capacity for tears and anger, enthusiasm and faith; we must participate in the effort to remove them from the slumber and confusion to which oppression and misery have submitted them; we must contribute to shaking away the apathy which pseudo-revolutions, failure and frustration have sown in popular consciousness.

If we consider the capacity to drive ahead and to promote, which this cinema can have, we can say that revolutionary cinema does not tell 'stories'; it is a cinema that makes history.

It makes history not only because it rebuilds it, deepens and expresses it, but because it participates in the historical phenomenon, at the same time as it influences it.

*Right to left: Jorge Sanjines, co-scripter Oscar Soria and cameraman Antonio Eguino.*





Q. Tell us about yourself and your activities before UKAMAU.

A. I was born in 1936. I studied philosophy for four years, I wrote some poetry, but I was always looking for a means of expression more in accord with my needs and I found that the cinema is a more dynamic form of communication than literature. We began, a group of friends, to make documentaries in Chile, where I had gone to study, and later in Bolivia. We made about nine shorts, documentaries or semi-documentaries like REVOLUCION, ANGELO PAOLINO, LA GUITARRA, BOLIVIA... These films were commissioned by the Ministry of Tourism or some other Ministry of the Paz Estenssoro government; at that time I was sympathetic with the revolutionary and nationalistic ideas of Paz Estenssoro and his colleagues, but, later on, the lack of agrarian reform and nationalisation of the mines made me lose my illusions and I moved further to the left. But in any case, this work on shorts gave us technical experience and revolutionised the Bolivian cinema. It led to the founding of The National Institute of Cinematography, of which I was director until it was closed and its members expelled after the making of UKAMAU in 1966 - this film, produced by the Institute, was considered 'negative' by the government. So to make YAWAR MALLKU we founded our own production company, 'Ukamau Limited'.

Q. So UKAMAU was the first Bolivian feature?

A. There had been one before, at least a long short by Jorge Ruiz called LA VERTIENTE, a mixture of documentary and fiction running for fifty minutes. But since that, there has been nothing apart from my two films.

Q. How did you come to make UKAMAU?

A. We thought it necessary to analyse the relationship between the two classes which make up Bolivian society, the Indians and the "mestizos" (half-castes): then to show that the Indians are capable of liberating themselves. The film ends with the Indian triumphant over the mestizos who is the petty exploiter, representative of a mixed and degenerate culture. It shows the particular conflict of the Indian, his culture being constantly threatened from all sides by Western culture, by the mestizos who represent Western culture in a debased form. It can be seen that the Indian has a much more profound relationship with nature than the mestizos has with his own reality, because the mestizos is in fact preoccupied with flight from reality, whereas the Indian, with all the material primitivism of his way of life, with all his technical underdevelopment, 'adheres' in a more authentic and human way to nature. This is the fundamental concern of the film, because we wanted to deepen awareness of the reality of our country which is very complex because we have diverse classes, racial groups and economically different cultures existing side by side.

Q. It is estimated that of a total population in Bolivia of 4,300,000 people, 63% are pure Indian, 30% are mestizos, and 7% white. Of which race are you?

A. I think that even those commonly called white are mestizos in Bolivia. I have some Indian blood that goes back to the fourth generation on my mother's side, while my father comes from a Spanish family (with some English blood that settled in Bolivia in the eighteenth century). I'll sidetrack a little to tell you that the music for YAWAR MALLKU comes from three different racial groups: the Indian music was especially composed by two peasants, the piece for guitar by a mestizo - which owes a little to Atahualpa Yupanqui (that is, an indigenous tune developed according to a different technique) and the tonal music by an artist of Western culture. It is clear that the Indian peasant majority will determine the life of the country, the whole historical process of its development. But it remains true that the greater part of this process to date has been dominated by the white and mestizo minorities who have seized power and left the majority behind. It is certainly these dominant minorities who have allowed the penetration of neo-capitalism and imperialism because they confuse their own interests with those of foreign capital. There is now such cultural alienation that these people live with their feet in Bolivia and their heads in Europe or the United States, totally severed from the national cultural reality.

Q. LA HORA DE LOS HORNOS shows that this is clearly the case in Argentina...

A. Yes, but I think it is far more blatant in Bolivia where a whole generation is oriented towards the United States. I was educated in a school where English was compulsory from the primary grade, and my parents wanted me to study in the United States as my classmates did. They completed their studies there. Antonio, the director of photography of YAWAR MALLKU, is a classic case. He spent ten years in America and when he came back he was almost a yankee in his way of thinking. It is to be seen in YAWAR MALLKU where the doctor's wife speaks to her very young children in English. You should not take that as a symbolic representation of cultural alienation. No! It is really common among this class which is thoroughly sterilised by foreign culture. This explains perfectly how the class in power surrenders our national riches to foreign capitalism, how the army aids imperialist penetration and protects monopoly interests instead of the national integrity - in the case of the mining industry especially.

Q. But to the extent that the Indian masses wish to preserve their own culture and refuse to integrate with the modern world, they chose to live in their own, enclosed communities, as you show them in your film. Are they not condemning themselves by doing this?



inations of the result before the chief reaches a verdict, but on this occasion a single throw was sufficient. Curiously, all the leaves fell in a straight line and the chief said, "Enough! These people are here with good intentions." The following day the attitude of the whole community was completely changed. Apart from the fact that the verdict was in our favour, we had broken the ice by demonstrating that we respected their beliefs. This does not signify that we believe in magic, but that we cannot reject it either. For two reasons: firstly because I wanted to show that each person must find the solutions to his problems within his own culture, and secondly because I am sure that modern man still has no profound knowledge of the limits of his mental powers. In any case, we observed on several occasions in the course of these ceremonies that the diviners were right, that they knew the most incredible things and that there was no possible rational explanation for their 'powers' - for that is all one can call them. Just because one is powerless to explain a phenomenon does not mean that one must reject it and in the knowledge of traditional or primitive societies there are elements that one must take into consideration and study without scepticism or scorn.

Q. UKAMAU has its basis in the Aymara community, whereas YAWAR MALLKU was made with the Quechuas...

A. Yes, these are the two principal Indian groups. Aymaras inhabited the country originally, their capital and cultural centre was Tiahuanaco. The Quechuas were conquerors, the race from which the Incas came, who occupied the territory of the Aymaras and imposed their language on the country so much so that the majority of Bolivian Indians speak Aymara or Quechua today.

Q. How was UKAMAU, the first Bolivian feature, received?

A. With considerable interest, especially in La Paz where the majority of the population speak and understand Aymara. But the bourgeoisie, the mestizos and whites did not come to see the film when it first came out. It was only after the film had had a good critical reception in Europe and several successes here and there that they became interested. We conducted an enquiry into this bourgeois public (without, of course, saying that we were the makers of the film) and in general people said "It's a Bolivian film, that must be bad" in accordance with that anti-national mentality which makes people look only outside the country. They also replied that a film in Aymara, which showed only Indians, could scarcely be interesting. I found this reaction again in Paris when UKAMAU was shown at the Cinematheque. At the end of the screening the Bolivian Ambassador approached me and whispered, "I am ashamed. Everyone will think that we are just a race of Indians." I said, "What do you think we are, then?"

Q. YAWAR MALLKU shows another kind of reaction: that of Sixto,

A. That is a real problem, and an interesting one to raise. When the Spanish arrived in Peru and Bolivia, they destroyed the civilisation of the Incas, their empire, their material strength and with it all possibility of technical development in the near future. But what they could not rub out was the spirit, the culture of this civilisation, because the Indians isolated themselves, falling back on their communities and traditions which they preserved with great rigour. It is true that for centuries they have been cut off, making it very difficult for the other groups to approach them or to understand their mentality. But if from a material point of view this turning in on themselves, this refusal to integrate, has been fairly negative, from a political and cultural point of view it has been positive, allowing the Indian to survive with an identity. I believe that in the revolutionary process which will transform reality and integrate the masses, this must be taken into account. It is not only the tools and techniques of economic development which should be considered but also the cultural elements that give our country its personality. They will help it to develop as a total civilisation, with a profound unity of its own. Why should we follow the example of a culture which is today in crisis and has virtually failed? When we consider the chief political directions taken by Western cultures, there seems none worth following because Western man is hell-bent upon bringing about his own death, as all the effects of his civilisation lead to destruction.

We must make a revolution which does not borrow attitudes, this celebration of material benefits, of the economic value of life. A different scale of values already exists among our people. Amongst the peasants, for example, there are values such as collective work and mutual aid. The Indian does not give things the same material value as does the West, or as we Westernised Bolivians do. We must rid ourselves of this mentality inherited from our education.

Q. How were you townspeople with your film equipment able to approach the Indian communities and shoot films?

A. We had some problems, especially on the second film. When they saw us coming, the mestizos who live close to the community, the mayor and the local government official, told the Indians that we were communist guerrillas come to kill and steal from them. Naturally, the women, who have great influence in the community, watched us with great distrust and hostility. Our good relations with the head of the community enabled us to stay there for several days until I proposed to Marcelino, the protagonist of the film and head of the village, that he submit us to 'the verdict of the cocoa'. He thought it a good idea, and that is the ceremony one sees, in brief, in the film. It is very impressive. All members of the community are assembled, women and children included, in the middle of the night for a six hour ceremony which lasts until dawn, when the verdict is reached. But in our case, an unusual thing happened. Normally, it takes several throws of the cocoa leaves and several exam-



the Indian who works in the town, who replies to the insult, "Stupid Indian", by denying that he is an Indian.

A. Of course, the Indian who leaves his community constantly comes up against people who identify him as inferior, reject him as an individual and they end up by giving him complexes. The uprooted Indian must, in order to survive, renounce his real self and accept his alienation.

Q. Is not the racial problem in Latin America more a social problem? In Brazil, for example, true racism as we know it in Europe does not exist. There it is said that a rich black becomes white and that a poor white becomes black.

A. It may well be that in Europe the racial complex is more national, or racialism more nationalised, than in Latin America where it involves something more emotional - that which allows, for example, a big property owner to be accepted in white society. But racism takes another form and we had a demonstration of it while shooting YAWAR MALLKU. We had lived for several days in a white woman's house and the first night we asked if we could borrow a mattress. The next day she realised that an Indian woman (Benedicta, the female lead in my two films) had slept on it. She took it from us and had the cover changed.

Q. Is it true that UKAMAU was dubbed in Spanish for distribution throughout Bolivia?

A. No - subtitled; because for urban Bolivians Aymara is a foreign language. With YAWAR MALLKU we are preparing versions in both Quechua and Aymara, dubbing even the 'gringos', the whites, so that the film can be shown in the countryside where its reception will be of far greater interest to us. I think this film will pose more problems of understanding for the Indian public, mainly because of the parallel montage and flashbacks, than did UKAMAU where the story was much simpler and linear. But something very exciting happens with this totally virgin, popular audience. Their interest in the image, in the story told, is such that they return to see the film several times. For the screenings of YAWAR MALLKU in the country regions we shall have a narrator present the film who will first tell the story of the film and show photographs of the characters, so carrying on the still living tradition of the travelling story teller which dates back to the Incas. After the screening we will talk with the people and then show the film again. If we manage to create some form of cinematic culture it would be an enormous jump in history - missing out the ABC of cinema to pass on to a more advanced level. We have very little time to communicate what we think is important but we feel that we should not restrict ourselves to too simplistic a schema of cinema which might in the end be dangerous.

Q. There were complaints that the use of flashbacks in the dramatic

construction of YAWAR MALLKU is outmoded...

A. We have thought about this problem, but we have tried not to have any cinematic prejudices, not to say to ourselves, "This was done by neo-realism or that was invented by such and such a film maker." We are not interested in purism or in formal originality. In the course of getting to know the cinema we have acquired a certain sum of knowledge and I believe that the most honest thing is to put this knowledge to good use. For example, confronted with the sequence where the brother is trying to sell the mattress or where he is tempted to steal, people have spoken of BICYCLE THIEVES. But we were not thinking about that work and it is only in the situation of the characters that there is a connection between the two films. What I must confess, however, is that the film has suffered a lot from lack of time and means. I only saw the film shown once with sound and I could never see the rushes before editing. The dubbing was done in Bolivia, the editing elsewhere, synchronisation in Buenos Aires. When something went wrong there was often no possibility of correcting it - five scenes were just left out because of dubbing problems.

Q. How did you find out about this sterilisation business?

A. The first echo came from a daily newspaper which revealed that in a maternity centre at Cuatajata near Lake Titicaca a group of North Americans were practising sterilisation. The news was also broadcast on the Catholic radio 'Fides' in La Paz. We tried to contact the journalist concerned but he was away, and we learned later that he had received an anonymous, threatening letter warning him to stay off the subject in future. Even at Cuatajata we could find no proof but in La Paz gynaecologists confirmed having come across women sterilised who had been to the American clinic in La Paz. These sterilisation centres are not very widespread in Bolivia. It is not yet happening on a very wide scale. But the coil is being popularised on a mass scale and where the women are not even literate the insertion of this instrument amounts to a kind of sterilisation because it is never removed and there is no control on the part of those who distribute it.

Q. There seem to be two problems; that raised by the sterilisation of people without their consent, which is a crime; and that raised on the demographic and economic level which is a matter of politics and education.

A. Yes, it is necessary to make the point clear. Personally, I am in favour of societies regulating the size of their population. But in Bolivia there is no demographic explosion, the lowest population density is four inhabitants per square kilometre and the infant mortality rate is 40%! And the yankees know that. For years, their sociologists, their anthropologists and their economists have studied this country and its Indian population and there are reasons for the measures they are



taking. In my view, the Americans want to control a population which is potentially a greater source of resistance to them than any other. Bolivian history has shown that the peasant masses, when they have been able to concretise the enemy, mobilise themselves very rapidly. (The problem today being that the enemy of the people is somewhat abstract. What is imperialism? Where can it be found?). At the time of the struggle for independence from the Spanish, around 1780, Tupac Amanu, an Indian of the Peruvian nobility, organised an uprising throughout the Indian territories. In Bolivia, his successor Tupac Atari surrounded La Paz with an hundred thousand warriors for three months, causing ten thousand Spaniards to die of hunger and thirst - and it is significant to remember that it was due to mestizos treachery that the Spaniards eventually defeated the rebellion.

Q. Do you really think that the politics of America are like those of the Nazis as summed up in the letter from Martin Boorman to Alfred Rosenberg as quoted in the introduction?

A. Boorman's letter and the speech of the American James Bomer, also quoted, denote two attitudes; one towards military expansion based upon the genocide of the Ukrainian people; the other of scientific inhumanity that considers human beings as guinea pigs. These two attitudes are perhaps different to begin with, but the result and the ideological content are the same. And I believe that today America thinks of Latin America as a field for experiment and that they are not far from thinking about people under their domination as the Nazis thought about their victims. Look at Vietnam. Aren't the Americans committing atrocities? Do they have qualms of conscience about the use of napalm?

Q. The episode of castration is invented isn't it?

A. Yes. In fact the Indians chased the members of the Peace Corps who sheltered in a house. The Indians besieged them and would have killed them if the mayor had not intervened. In the film this act has the same meaning as the vengeance in UKAMAU. I think that if we are communicating with the people at all, it is essential to tell them that they are capable of liberating themselves. For me, it involves, very simply, a call to violence, a violence that the people have not provoked but rather a violence which, until now, they have been subjected to. The last static shot of arms raised with weapons signifies very clearly and unequivocally that the only solution for the Indians to ameliorate their situation and for Latin America to liberate itself is revolution.

Q. What was the government position regarding the revelations made about sterilisation? It would seem from the film that the local government official was the accomplice of the Americans.

A. No, the official is not an accomplice because he does not know what is happening. He believes that he is only doing his job in summarily executing the accused and the escape law is very common in

Jorge Sanjines: Yawar Malliku







Bolivia. As for the government, they have continually denied awareness of these activities and have pretended to believe that the whole story was false. But deputies and senators questioned the Minister in Congress. I tend to believe that the government was not effectively aware of the activities in question. It is similar to the occasion when it was discovered that the Americans maintained torture centres without government knowledge.

Q. What attitude did the government have to the film?

A. We predicted that there would be an attempt to bust it, so we contacted the groups which count for most in terms of public opinion - students, intellectuals, journalists. We warned them that the film contained a grave accusation and would doubtless be banned. That did happen but five hundred people took to the street shouting the name of the film. The police put down the demonstration with gas and water cannon but the agitation was good for the film, giving it unexpected publicity. Under pressure of public and press opinion the film was authorised for distribution. I don't think the change in government since the making of the film has done anything to change the situation depicted in it. The change does not signify very much. For the moment it allows certain liberal Ministers to profit from the situation, but that will not last very long. It is only a strategic measure.

Q. You have made two films in favour of the Indian and his culture. Don't you now want to make a more direct attack on the propertied class seen in YAWAR MALLKU?

A. Yes. To expose this class of people who live in Bolivia while remaining strangers, unaware of the national reality, does interest me. But what is even more important is to make certain people aware of the reality that surrounds them, hidden by their milieu, their education. I am thinking especially of the young, the students of La Paz who greeted the film with enormous interest, organising forums in the schools and doing written work. It is very interesting to confirm that these young people of fifteen or seventeen years old have a political conscience, talking of the problems of imperialism, of political engagement, economic penetration and the class struggle.

Q. A last question. What exactly does the title, YAWAR MALLKU

A. 'Mallku' is a Quechua word which means both 'chief' and 'condor' and here it is the name of the chief of the community. And 'yawar' means 'blood'. Blood has great importance in the film. There is the story of Sixto, the worker who is looking for blood to save a life and of Ignacio Mallku who is pursuing the destroyers of life. The film represents the conflict of the two forces which characterise national Bolivian reality; the people who seek life and imperialism bringing death.





# EMITAI

(Lord of the Sky)

SENEGAL 1972

Director: OUSMANE SEMBENE

Production: FILMS DOMIREV  
(Dakar)

Producer: PAULIN SOUMANOU  
VIEYA

Photography: MICHEL  
REMAUDEAU (Colour)

Editor: GILBERT KIKOINE

Camera: GEORGES GARESTAN

Sound: EL HADJ MBOW

Cast: *The Soldiers*

The Commandant ROBERT

FONTAINE

The Lieutenant

MICHEL

The Colonel

RENAUDEAU

PIERE

BLANCHARD

*The Villagers*

Ibou Camara, Ousmane Camara,

Joseph Diatta, Dji Niassebanor,

Siberalang, Kalifa.

English subtitles

Moscow Film Festival (2nd Prize),

Tashkent Festival (1st Prize). Also

shown at the Cannes and Berlin  
Festivals.

103 mins. Colour 16mm

FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER 7.30



## Emitai

Senegal, 1972

Director: Ousmane Sembene

*Cert*—(not yet issued). *dist*—Politkino. *p.c*—Films Domirev. *p*—Paulin Soumanou Vieya. *sc*—Ousmane Sembene. *ph*—Michel Remaudeau. *In colour*. *ed*—Gilbert Kikoïne. *a.d*—(none). *sd*—El Hadj Mbow. *lp*—Robert Fontaine (*Commandant*), Michael Remaudeau (*Lieutenant*), Pierre Blanchard (*Colonel*) Ibou Camara, Ousmane Camara, Joseph Diatta, Dji Niassebanor, Sibesalang, Kalifa. 9,270 ft. 103 mins. *Subtitles*.

In a small West African village, the French are recruiting troops for World War II. One young man runs away, but after his father is put out in the sun, his sisters bring him back to the village, where he releases his father and is marched off with the others: only women, children and older men are left. The women plant the rice and collect the harvest, the chiefs meet to discuss what can be done about the French. The following year, the Army returns to the village to requisition rice, which the villagers have been refusing to pay as tax to the colonial government. Most of the chiefs place their hope in the intervention of the gods, but one does not. The men whom he leads out to fight the French are easily defeated, and he himself, mortally wounded, dies denouncing the gods. In order to force the elders to produce the rice, the troops round up the women and put them out in the sun. The elders are left with three problems: to bury their dead (for which they need the women and rice); to liberate the women; and to decide about the French levy. They resolve to go ahead with the funeral, but are interrupted by the troops demanding the rice. Eventually, the chiefs capitulate and the women are released to proceed with the funeral. The men are used to carry the rice away, but at a certain point refuse to go further. The troops open fire, and the men are all killed.

Shot on a shoestring budget, Sembene's magnificent film is also exemplary political cinema, ranking with early Glauber Rocha. The camera is directed to capture the struggle from the tribe's perspective and depicts without sentimentality the demolition of a colonised culture. If the film is weighted, it is towards the two young brothers who take upon themselves the responsibility of caring for the people—picking up the belongings of the two 'recruits', bringing water and shade to the women put out in the sun, silently and solemnly. *Emitai* can also be seen schematically as a final conflict between two modes of living—one rich in its own mythology. The African tribe is depicted with an almost anthropological eye: its sexual division of labour, its tradition of patriarchal authority, its relationship to the gods through ritual ceremony (leading to the appearance and denunciation of the same gods) are recorded with deep respect. What the colonial regime has to offer is impoverished by comparison: a new father, Pétain (there is a brilliant scene in which Pétain is exchanged for de Gaulle), marching songs and a new uniform; while African recruits are transformed by the Army into an indistinguishable troop of mercenaries. The two cultures are interlocked in a representation of a constantly repeated experience within colonised countries. Attachment to traditional forms leaves the tribe helpless; not only does calling on the gods bring no respite, but going out to struggle—although more heroic—brings little success. The tribe responds to the French as if at war with another village and, inevitably, superior rifle-power overcomes them. The sensual and pacific nature of the relationship between the tribe and its environment—soon ruptured by the intervention of the oppressive forces—is conveyed in the sequence where two young men pass one after the other down a country road bordered by long grass and are then ambushed by hiding soldiers. This close relationship is also emphasised in a lyrical scene of the women planting and harvesting the rice. Anyone interested in how to make a film from the point of view of the oppressed should see *Emitai*.

ROSALIND DELMAR



# SEMBENE INTERVIEW

'FILM MAKERS HAVE A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR PEOPLE'

"I'm not trying to make cinema for my buddies or for a limited circle of specialists. What I'm interested in is exposing problems of the people to which I belong . . . For me, the cinema is a means of political action. On the ideological level, I'm an advocate of Marxism-Leninism. But on this point I should add two things: on one hand, I don't want to produce a 'poster' cinema; on the other, I don't think it's possible to change the given situation with a single film. But I believe that if we African film-makers produce a series of films oriented in the same way, we'll succeed in modifying a little bit the powers that be, and in developing the consciousness of the people."

Thus, in a 1968 interview with French critic Guy Hennebelle, Ousmane Sembene defined his conception of a militant African cinema, a cinema "at the same time spectacular and didactic." Africa's best known—and perhaps best—film-maker, Sembene has travelled around the world to screen his films and promote the cause of a truly indigenous African cinema, one that can serve as a political tool in Africa's struggle to free itself from colonialism and neo-colonialism. Sembene has thus become the single most important figure responsible for bringing African cinema to international attention. In his book *Cinemas Africains en 1972* (see *Cinéaste*, Vol. V, No. 3), Guy Hennebelle characterizes Sembene as "the pope of African cinema" and "the father of Senegalese cinema", a film-maker who "pursues his own way while zig-zagging between the contradictions of the Senegalese regime, French neo-colonialism and the cactuses on the desert of African cinema."

Born in 1923 in Ziguinchor (situated in the Casamance, a rural region in the south of Senegal), Sembene worked as a commercial fisherman with his family until he left to attend the Ceramics School at Marsassoum. He subsequently worked as a mason and

a garage mechanic and, during World War II, served as a forced enlistee with a Senegalese unit of the French Army, participating in the invasion of Italy. After being discharged he moved to Marseilles where for ten years he worked on the docks, became active in union organizing, taught himself to read and write French, and began to write novels and short stories. His first book, *Le Docker Noir*, published in 1956, told of the terrible working conditions on the docks and efforts to organize the workers. Many other works followed, including *Oh pays, mon beau peuple* (1957), *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960), *Voltaïque* (1962), *L'Harmattan* (1964) and *Le Mandat* (1966).

Frustrated by the limitations of writing in a language unreadable to most of his countrymen (who speak Wolof, or one of a number of other African languages), Sembene turned to the cinema. Unable to obtain an apprenticeship in Paris, he went to the Soviet Union where he studied in Moscow at the state film school (as a student of Mark Donskoi) and the Gorky Film Studio. Returning to Senegal in 1963, Sembene directed his first short film, *BOROM SARRET*, about a poor cart driver in Dakar. The following year he completed another short, *NIAYE*, about the hypocrisy of the traditional chiefs and their collusion with the French administration during the colonialist period. In 1966 he directed his first feature film, *LA NOIRE DE . . .*, about a young Senegalese girl taken to France to serve as a housemaid. The film won several awards at international film festivals but it was *MANDABI*, made in 1968, which established Sembene as Africa's foremost film-maker. Based on his own novel, *MANDABI (THE MONEY ORDER)* is a tragi-comic account of the difficulties experienced by an elderly Moslem illiterate who has a run-in with a series of inept and corrupt officials of the modern-day Senegalese bureaucracy when he attempts to cash a money order sent to him by his nephew working in Paris. *MANDABI* won critical



reference. All of their symbols, all of their criteria for beauty, come from the Western world. Based on that, the Europeans always accuse the African women of being alienated. But you have to live with an African family in their own household to see—they have paid all the expenses of colonialism.

Q: How did you intend to show the traditional political leadership in EMITAI?

A: There are two things in EMITAI concerning traditional chiefs; in the tradition, what has been preserved is for them a democracy. You can't be a chief by birth. One is a chief because one is worthy, a man who is respectable. In their gathering in the film each elected person must speak. The chief is not a chief in the Western sense—he's the spokesman. He's only the chief when there's a need, he's not a chief all the time. I think it's a democracy. Another thing is that the chief, as the chief, can't decide anything as regards the women. You see that in the film. They can't decide anything even though they are all elected.

Q: What do you mean they can't decide anything as regards the women?

A: I mean that they're chiefs and from a European point of view they ought to have been able to decide to give up the rice. But they knew that it was up to the women to decide that, they could not, and the only thing they could do was to all go to war. But they couldn't bring anybody else into it—that's another form of democracy within a certain specific ethnic group. There are ethnic groups in Africa where the kings and chiefs decide. There are also a lot of ethnic groups like mine, for instance, where there are no kings or chiefs. The fellow is elected, he doesn't earn any money, he doesn't have anything more than the rest of them, and, commonly, they call him the servant of the people.

Q: You mentioned earlier the role of the military in contemporary Africa—the negative tradition, the anti-African tradition out of which it has come. What specifically did you intend to show in EMITAI about the soldier?

A: Those soldiers, who were mercenaries, were called 'tirailleurs.' France recruited them by force and gave them minimal instruction, a small salary and a rifle, and they obeyed. They started by conquering their own families, by participating in the colonization of their own homes and villages. With the development of colonialization they were everywhere. Behind two whites there were thirty soldiers with rifles, but not a single one of them had the idea to revolt. At no moment in history did they rebel—neither for the people nor out of their own personal humiliation. Colonialism just levelled them down and now, during independence, it's they—having been formed by the French army or the British army—who make the *coup d'états* and who assume the leadership. And they are worse today because they're fascists. Therefore, what I wanted to show with the soldiers was that the past and the present are the same. We see the sergeant, for example, as an obedient dog. He doesn't even have a name; his name is Sergeant, like a dog.

Q: The term 'fetish' is mentioned in the film from time to time. Is that your term or is that the translation? In terms of describing religious practices, is there any particular reason it is simply not called 'religion' or 'traditional religion'?

A: It is the Sergeant who uses the term and who explains it—you have put yourself into his mentality because he is the man who has been 'educated.' There are two words that we use everyday which the Western world has imposed upon us concerning our own religion and culture. When we talk about an African culture or dance we say 'folklore' and when we talk about our religion we talk about 'fetish', and that is exactly why I put that in the sergeant's mouth. It pleases me that you noticed it, because I have it repeated several times. But the others never say 'fetish', they always say 'we are going to consult our gods.'

Q: Personally, I am very sensitive about words like 'fetish', 'chief', and 'tribe.'

A: The old men in the group never talked about Senegal. They always said 'we the Diola' because they identified with something.

Q: The final question on EMITAI relates to movement in the film. I would like you to comment on the tempo, the movement of the film and how it actually relates to the nation state Senegal, with its diversity of languages. I just want a little bit of explanation on something you said earlier.

A: The Diolas are a minority in Senegal, they speak a language that the others don't understand, so the sub-titles are in French. The majority of the people who go to see the film, first of all, don't speak Diola, and they have problems reading sub-titles. In order to have them better understand the film, then, it was necessary to have a slowness which was, however, not too slow—and that's why I adopted that particular approach. I also worked a great deal on the decor. Each shot includes something which lets them see for themselves that their country is very beautiful, that we are not showing them the countryside of France, that our trees are just as pretty as others—even the dead trees can be pretty. But to come back to the question of language, I think it is very important when you make a film of similar ethnic groups to work on the musicality of the words so they will have a very precise and very clear tone so that the people who see the film are not shocked, so their ears are not shocked by the sound. That's why I worked so much on this tempo, which is a little slower than that of MANDABI. This problem of language is one of the problems confronting film-makers in Africa.

Q: The major problem or just one of the problems?

A: One of the problems. I think given the fact that there is such a diversity of languages in Africa, we African film-makers will have to find our own way for the message to be understood by everyone, or we'll have to find a language that comes from the image and the gestures. I think I would go as far to say that we will have to go back and see some of the silent films and in that way find a new inspiration.

Contrary to what people think we talk a lot in Africa but we talk when it's time to talk. There are also those who say blacks spend all of their time dancing—but we dance for reasons which are our own. Dancing is not a flaw in itself, but I never see an engineer dancing in front of his machine, and a continent or a people does not spend its time dancing. All of this means that the African film-maker's work is very important—he must find a way that is his own, he must find his own symbols, even create symbols if he has to. This doesn't mean we are rejecting others, but it should be our own culture.

Q: You were talking earlier about the music of the wind. Would you explain what you mean by that?

A: The whites, for example, have music for everything in their films—music for rain, music for the wind, music for tears, music for moments of emotion, but they don't know how to make these elements speak for themselves. They don't feel them. But in our own films we can make the sensation of these elements felt, without denaturing the visual elements, without broadcasting everything to the audience.

I'll give you an example, even two. In EMITAI, when the women are forced by the soldiers to sit out in the sun, the only sound you can hear is the sound of the rooster and the weeping of the children; however, there was also wind. I did not look for music to engage the audience. I just wanted to show, by gestures, that the women are tired, their legs are tired, their arms are burdened—one woman has the sun shining in her eyes, another two are sleeping. All this is shown in silence, but it is a silence that speaks. I could have had a voice coming from the outside, but I would have been cheating. Instead, for example, there were the two children who were walking along to bring water to the women. When they crossed the woods, you couldn't see their legs, but you could hear, very clearly, the dead leaves underfoot. For me, this represents the search for a cinema of silence.

Another example: in the Sacred Forest, life continues



acclaim at numerous festivals and, despite the Senegalese government's dislike of the film, it became the first Senegalese film to be shown commercially in Senegal. And in 1970, MANDABI became the first African feature film to be theatrically exhibited in the U.S.

In 1971, after being assured complete freedom of expression, Sembene directed TAUW, a short film commissioned by the National Council of Churches which dealt with the contemporary 'generation gap' in Senegal. The same year he also completed another feature, EMITAI (Diola for 'God of Thunder'), based on an actual incident which occurred in Senegal during World War II and involving the resistance of villagers in Senegal's Casamance region to orders of the French colonial regime to turn over a 50-lb. quota of rice to the French army.

Last year, Sembene was one of ten international directors invited to participate in a film on the Olympic Games held in Munich. His sequence (on the Senegalese basketball team) seems to have been dropped, however, from the completed feature, recently released by Wolper Productions as VISIONS OF EIGHT. Sembene also independently produced his own one-hour film, focusing on the African participation in the Games and including sequences on the anti-Rhodesia boycott by African and Afro-American athletes, an interview with Jesse Owens, and the action by 'Black September' commandos.

The following interview, conducted by Harold D. Weaver, Jr., former Chairman of the Department of Africana Studies at Rutgers University and translated by Sembene's American interpreter, Carrie Moore, took place last Fall in Philadelphia on the occasion of Sembene's participation in the 15th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association.

Q: What message do you have for the Afro-American community regarding your recently-released film EMITAI?

A: I think that what I want to do first of all is to give them an exact idea of Africa, a better idea of Africa, so they can learn of other African ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has a culture and I would compare the Diola, who are a minority in Senegalese society, to the Afro-Americans, who are a minority among whites. They have a culture and they must do everything to save it because that culture is what makes their personality. I think that knowing Africa better will solidify their personality with that new black personality now emerging in American society because we all have the same cultural matrix.

Q: What did you set out to do in EMITAI? What were your objectives?

A: My first goal was to make this film a school of history. From ancient times in Africa—dating back to the medieval period—we know stories of resistance. During the period of colonialism it would appear that there were no struggles for national liberation, but that's not true. I can show that during this period not a single month passed when there was not an effort of resistance. The problem was there was no communication among the people. There were scattered struggles, even individual struggles, but they were stifled. If people had known about it before, we would have been free now for a long time. But today, with film-making, we can learn from each other.

For example, we are thirsty to know all about the Afro-American movement. We know that in the Civil War

there were black battalions which participated. We know that Afro-American mothers have done everything to raise their children. We also know of great Afro-American writers. And if one day they can bring these facts to the screen, you can imagine the number of people who are going to realize all of this. That's why I think EMITAI is important. That's also why we think that, for us, film-making has to be the school, and that film-makers have a great responsibility to our people.

Q: Would you elaborate on your comments of last night in which you compared the behavior of the French colonialists in Africa with the present-day politicians and administrators of constitutionally-independent Africa?

A: We have to have the courage to say that during the colonial period we were sometimes colonized with the help of our own leaders, our own chiefs, and our own kings. We mustn't be ashamed of our faults and our errors. We have to recognize them in order to fight them. In recent years there have been many, many *coup d'états* in Africa but not a single one of these military people fought for the liberation of Africa. At the time when there was an awareness developing in Africa, it was these military men who were killing and imprisoning their own brothers, mothers and sisters. In the majority of the African countries the leaders and heads of state are heads of state with the consent of the French. Most of their personal guards are former French military officers and their personal advisors are French.

I can give you two striking examples. When the Gabonese people wanted to overthrow their government, France sent soldiers, but the soldiers came from Dakar and Abidjan. And not too long ago in Madagascar the French became tired of their former chiefs, so when the people were struggling to overthrow the president, France declared she was not going to intervene. We have another example, Gilbert Youlou, in the Congo. When the people wanted to overthrow him, he telephoned De Gaulle who said 'no.' If De Gaulle had said 'yes', Youlou would still be the president. This is to explain to you the totality of things taking place in Africa and the kind of thing I wanted to show in the film.

Q: One thing that impressed me about EMITAI was the importance of women in the act of resistance to colonialism. Women are thought of by many Americans to have a subordinate role in Africa. Did you set out intentionally in EMITAI to point out the important role of women in Africa, both historically and currently?

A: First of all, I have to say that the story of EMITAI is based on an actual event. The person who led the struggle, all by herself, was a woman—and a woman who was sick. The colonialists killed her, but they didn't kill her husband. I can give you an example of the Strike of Thies, I can give you an example of the birth of the R.D.A.\*, I can even talk of recent times under Senghor. In 1963 the women left the indigenous quarter called the medina to overthrow Senghor. On their march the men also came and in front of the palace they killed more than 150 people.

I think it's a white man's vision that says that our women have never participated in our struggle. In fact, the participation of women in the struggle has several levels, including the raising, the socializing of children, and preserving our culture. It's a fact that African culture has been preserved by the women, and it's thanks to them that what has been saved has been saved. They're also less alienated and much more independent than the men. All of this means that we mustn't neglect the participation of women in the struggle. It is true that at the present time we have a lot of 'sophisticated' girls, but these are girls in the city, and most of the time it's not their fault because they don't have any symbols or points of

\*The Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, founded in 1946 by Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, was one of the foremost interterritorial nationalist movements involved in agitating for independence from France during the postwar years.





Ousmane Sembene (2nd from right) during shooting of *EMITA*

because there is a fire and the wind is blowing. I didn't try to bring in any music, so when the empty gourd falls it makes a noise. In that case, the silence is very profound. I think all of this indicates a search on our parts, a search for African film-making. And I'm sure that we are on the way to creating our own cinema because we often meet as African film-makers to discuss our films with enthusiasm, to look for the best way to transmit our message.

European film-makers often use music which is gratuitous. It's true that it is pleasant to hear but, culturally, does it leave us with anything? I think the best film would be one after which you have to ask yourself, 'Was there any music in that film?' Today there are films that you could sell with music, such as *SHAFT*. You remember the music, but maybe you don't remember the images or the message. In that case I would say it was the musician who was the film-maker.

Q: I became very much aware of your own sensitive use of music in *BOROM SARRET*—it was very obvious, very overt, there. When the cart driver goes between the European borders and the medina, it becomes very obvious how you switch back and forth between the indigenous music of the medina and the European traditional music, which they call 'classical music', in the European quarters.

A: *BOROM SARRET* was my first film and I didn't have the awareness that I have now, but I wanted to show the European area and the Africans who lived in the European life-style. The only music I could relate to them was the classical music, the minuets of the 18th Century, because they're still at that mentality.

Q: Regarding your reason for making *TAUW*, you are quoted as having said, "This is the basic problem of Africa, there is a terrible gulf between young people's aspirations and their accomplishments." Would you elaborate on that?

A: All young people in the world (and I think this is true) have an aspiration to surpass, or to measure themselves in relation to, something that is great—to surpass what their fathers have done. But in Africa today the youth are

completely sacrificed. For example, since I made *TAUW* approximately a year ago, the situation in Africa has become worse—for the simple reason that they don't have any work. And when I say that they don't have any work, I'm only talking about the men, I'm not even talking about the women who are the majority of the Senegalese population of 4 million. The majority of them are under 25 years old and there are perhaps only about 1/3 of them who go to school, and even their future is uncertain.

Q: I would like you to explain another quote attributed to you—"We must understand our traditions before we can hope to understand ourselves." Many Afro-Americans feel the same way, but I'm curious about your own interpretation of what that means.

A: That is, we must understand our traditions, our own culture, the very depths of it. In African languages the word culture does not exist. They say that a man is educated, he is very well brought up, or he is from a very agreeable society. Therefore, culture is just a mental approach to a pleasant society. Culture itself, then, is like the hyphen between a man's birth and his death.

The Europeans say that our old men are good, but we never say that a man is good, we say that he is a man of culture. We mean that he is from an agreeable society and has an elevated sense of humanity. It has nothing to do with weakness. You can be present at meetings of old men where for hours they don't say anything to each other, they just sort of joke around. But in the process of joking they say what they want to say. A man of culture for us is one who has the key word for every situation. And you can go anywhere you want to and you'll always find the same attitude—you can't be a witness or a judge where we are as long as the community doesn't recognize you as one. You can have all kinds of diplomas and not be invited to participate; and the greatest humiliation for a man in Africa is never to be called upon at difficult times. For us, then, one is not automatically a judge. Sometimes when there is a public discussion, and there is a



foreigner or stranger in the area, they'll invite him—but he has to be a respectable stranger. After having exposed all the facts, they ask him what he thinks, posing the question this way: 'In a similar situation where you're from, how do you resolve this problem?' And depending on what he says and his manner of expression, we know whether or not he is a man of culture. So in Africa there is no man of culture in the European sense of that word. Culture for us means an honorable man, a man worthy of your faith and whose word means something. For example, if an old man sends a young person to see another old man, sometimes he sends along an object of value. He gives to the young person an object that would be recognized and he says, 'Here, take this and tell the other that I sent you.'

Q: One key problem the black film-maker faces in the United States is that there are only white distributors. This appears to be the case in many parts of Africa also, including your own country. How does this affect which films are shown?

A: I'm very happy you posed that problem because it is a problem for the whole Third World—and we consider the Afro-American community to be a colony within American society. So, faced with the same problems, we're looking for a solution. We think that instead of inundating the African market with films made by whites, there's a place for films made by Afro-Americans. But there is no immediate solution. If Afro-Americans were rich enough to buy all of the theaters here, they'd have the control, but I don't think that's going to happen. Likewise, in Africa—Francophone Africa and Anglophone Africa—distribution is in the hands either of the French, the British or the Lebanese. At the moment, we are trying to find a means of resolving this problem. Perhaps if we could get the Afro-American film-makers and the African film-makers together, it might be possible—by beginning on a small scale—to distribute our own films on the African continent and with Afro-American distributors. But we mustn't forget that while the cinema is an art, it's also an industry, and the problem that you pose concerns the industrial side of film-making. It could probably only be solved by the formation of a group which shares the same ideology. I don't mean ideology in a political sense, but in the sense of having the same interests.

Q: At Cannes, in 1970, in a conversation with the man who is responsible for distribution in Kenya, he indicated to me that there was no real interest in the distribution of Afro-American films there, that they were primarily interested in cowboy films.

A: That's the same answer we get from the French or from our African leaders because they have a complete ignorance of the role of films. We think that, little by little, we are changing this mentality which says that a cowboy film is the only kind of film that the African public likes. I think that it's up to African film-makers to fight to change this defective distribution. The African public is now beginning to appreciate our films, so saying that it is a cowboy film that the African public prefers is not really telling the truth. For instance, there is a public now prepared to receive Afro-American films in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, etc. For the African public the most well-known actors are Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte and I'm sure a film like *SUPER FLY* would have the largest box-office of any film in Africa. So you can see that it's not really a question of a preference for cowboy films, it's just that those distributors and certain government leaders who deal with distribution prefer cowboy films.

But I think that with the Pan-African Federation of Cinéastes (FEPACI) we are now beginning to change things. The Federation is now recognized by the Organization for African Unity and the Arab League and our films are beginning to circulate on the African continent. My own method has been that each time I go into an African country, I show my film and afterwards discuss it with the audience and with the government officials. For example, *MANDABI*, *LA*

*NOIRE DE . . .*, and *BORROM SHARRETT* have been all over Africa. And other films made by Africans are circulating. Of course, overall, distribution is still in the hands of foreign interests. There is not a single African who controls distribution outside of countries like Guinea, Mali or Nigeria, and since in these cases it's the government which controls distribution, they take all the films made by Africans. Upper Volta also controls its film distribution and they take all the African films. While this is something very positive, it's still insufficient because there is no coordination between the various states, so what we're working for now is that coordination. Next year we're supposed to have a meeting of film-makers and the report that I'm supposed to give is on the problem of distribution (films being distributed, their ability to gain income, their tax, and to foresee a general distribution plan). We think that what we're going to ask for is within the reach of our governments so we're sure that in the future we'll accomplish our goal—that's what we're working for.

Q: Have you seen any of the new films being produced about black Americans and, if so, are there any that you have liked?

A: I saw *SOUNDER* and, when I saw it, I wondered if it had been written by a white man or a black man. When I was told it had been written by a black man, I was very happy. I don't know if it's his first, second or third film, and I don't know how much money he had to make it, but I sense a man who loves his people and who, by means of this story (even though it is limited), wants to tell us something. I don't know about his childhood but I know that he loves his family and I know that he is respected. It's a film that I would like for all fathers to see. And the woman who plays the mother is the best Afro-American actress I've ever seen. I don't know if this film has been sub-titled or dubbed into French but I'm going to recommend that it be invited to Africa. I'm sure that if this film is projected for an African audience, they will forget that it takes place in America. The only thing which did not please me about the film is that I'm sure that in 1933 there were an enormous amount of racial problems in the U.S. But even if this problem isn't brought out, the film gives a sense of a respectful family just as it exists with us in Africa.

The other film I saw was *BLACK GIRL*, the new film by Ossie Davis which also deals with the family in America. It shows that within the family it's possible to have all kinds of hate, all kinds of lowness, but it's still the family. I think that we need to explore the inner workings of the family, and in this film we have four generations tied together: the grandmother, the mother, the daughter, and another younger girl. A moral problem is raised because the grandmother is living common-law; the mother didn't have a husband, but she worked and raised her children, and even raised a girl who was not her own child, and she succeeded; and the only man in the film has a lot of money and thinks that love can be bought. If we compare the man in *BLACK GIRL* to the man in *SOUNDER*, and compare the children in *SOUNDER* to the children in *BLACK GIRL*, we'd have a complete universe. And that's the kind of film that I like to make, because it's the kind of film that teaches us to read and to know and to enhance our sentiments. We mustn't forget that for centuries they've been working to destroy us. We're everything except moral men—we're gangsters, drug addicts, criminals, as if we had no parents. So I think that films like this are useful.

Q: I would like to ask one final question. What is your next film project?

A: I'm going to make a film on a Senegalese big businessman, on the birth of the black bourgeoisie.

Q: Briefly, why?

A: Because we're witnessing the birth of an aborted child and some of these circumstances are very dangerous—too dangerous because they are being manipulated from the outside, from Europe, and I want to show how they're being manipulated, and why the people must kill them.





# THE BATTLE OF THE 10 MILLION

(La Bataille des 10 Millions)

FRANCE/CUBA 1970

Director: CHRIS MARKER

Production: SLON/ICAIC

58 Mins B & W 16mm

English Version

# WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Colombian testimony number one

Colombia 1971

A film by Carlos Alvarez

Animation Manuel Vargas, Oscar Beltra

Voices Humberto Martinez Salcedo

Music Blas Emilio Atehortua

41 mins / B&W / 16mm

English subtitles.

FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER 7.30





# THE BATTLE OF THE 10 MILLION

(La Bataille des 10 Millions)  
FRANCE/CUBA 1970  
Director: CHRIS MARKER  
Production: SLON/ICAIC  
58 Mins B & W 16mm  
English Version

"Chris Marker's second reportage from Cuba (his first was CUBA SI!) covers the period of the 1968-70 Zafra, the sugar harvest that was to have exceeded 10,000,000 tons but that proved a bitter disappointment. Starting with the acknowledgement that, 'this year, Cuba is no longer so fashionable', the film examines many facets of Cuban life today, gradually building an argument that reaffirms its maker's solidarity with the ongoing Cuban social revolution. The dialogue between Fidel Castro and the Cuban people provides Marker with a dialectical base for the film's structure: re-edited scenes from Santiago Alvarez'. Cuban documentaries alternate with news footage of Fidel's auto-critique before the people on July 26th, 1970, which admitted the failure of the harvest, and attempted a frank analysis of the basic reasons for the setback. Marker logically interrupts Fidel's speech with comments by workers, not only to underline the harmony between Fidel and the masses, but also to prevent the viewer from being swept up emotionally by Fidel's eloquence. Here and elsewhere in this extraordinary document, Marker refuses easy lyricism in favour of a rigorous objective treatment."

TOM LUDDY

"A clear, informative well-argued account of the state of the revolution looked at through the documentation of a single event: Castro's attempt to raise the 1970 sugar harvest from something like 4½ million tons to an all-time high of 10 million without loss of production in other industries. The concentration on a single event prevents BATTLE falling into the voyeuristic trap of films like CUBA VA.

"BATTLE's tone is that of argument, intelligent discussion rather than political harangue, the tone of Castro's speeches, in fact. SLON have built the film from segments of Castro's six

hour television programme, interviews with people on the street, in factories, cutting cane, and from the massive rally at which Castro was forced to admit failure. They use animated sequences, stopped frame and occasional snatches of a pop soundtrack. The film's technique is to counter our objections as they arise: about the possibility of USSR imperialism replacing that of the US, whether it provides fodder for the enemy to discuss Cuba's poverty problem, for instance . . .

"Apart from the film giving you a rare chance to catch up on one direction in which European non-commercial film groups are moving, BATTLE OF THE TEN MILLION also provides, beneath the level of the narrative itself, a precise and unclipped view of the implications of revolution in South America."

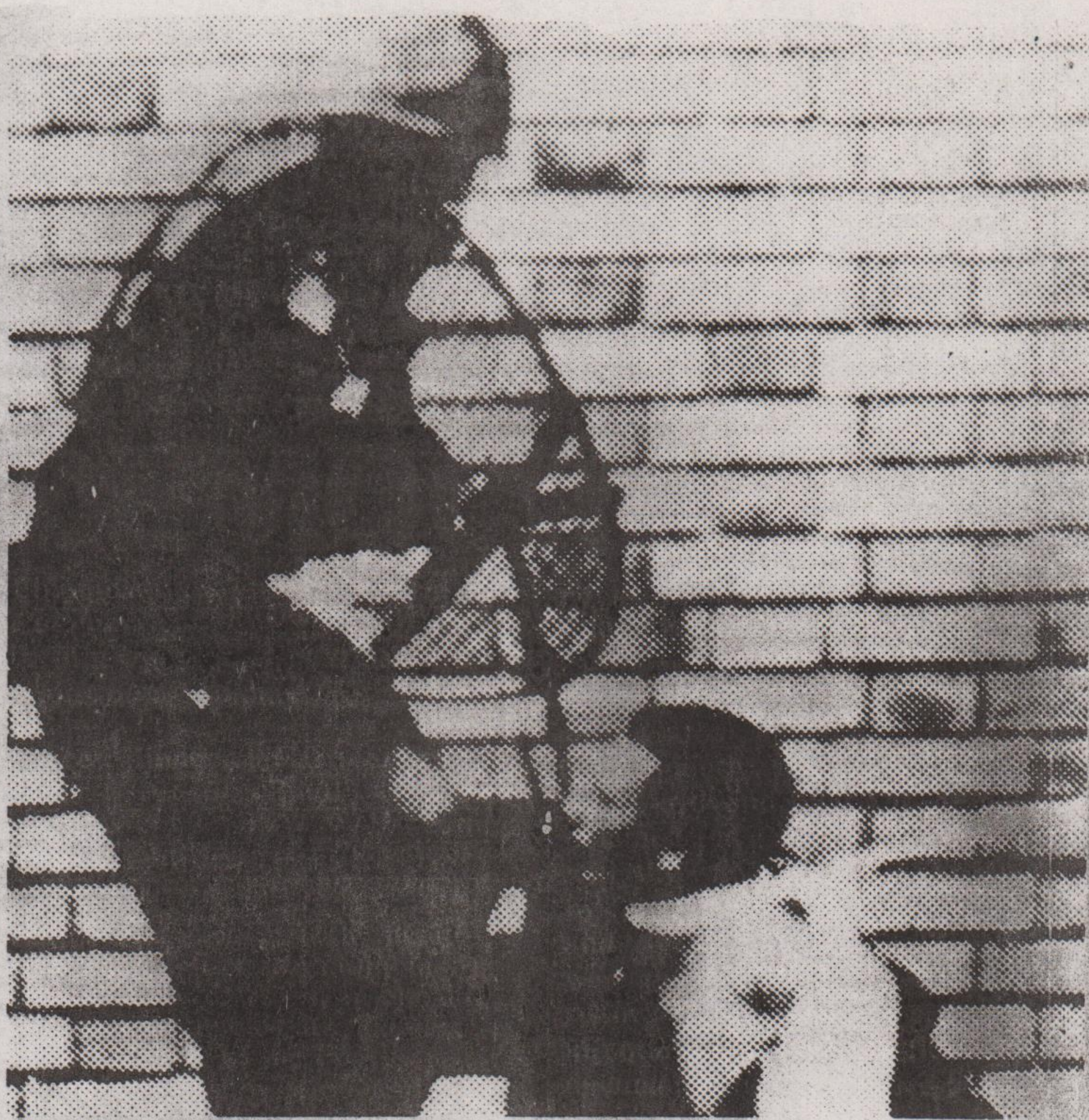
VERINA GLAESSNER, Time Out

"Somebody ought to sign up Fidel Castro. Chris Marker's THE BATTLE OF THE 10 MILLION proves him perhaps the most extraordinary political performer of our time. Marker, who made CUBA SI! a decade ago, watches Fidel's auto-critique before the people after the failure of the 1969-70 sugar harvest that was to have produced 10 million tons. It is magnificent. One leaves this 58-minute documentary praying to God that one day some British politician might be persuaded to say things like 'We have piled up idiocies, but . . .'. Recommended."

DEREK MALCOLM, The Guardian

"SLON, (now renamed ISKRA) is a co-operative filmmaking group which grew out of the shooting of LOIN DE VIETNAM and the May events in France. It, unlike Godard's Vertov Group, does not link the search for an ideology with search for new forms of expression. The forms it uses grow out of the situation the group works within. SLON are concerned less with the perpetuation of a general dissemination of counterinformation and their films are distributed through cine clubs, worker groups and political organisations. Their targets are imperialism, capitalism and the monopolising of information."

VERINA GLAESSNER, Time Out



# WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Colombian testimony number one  
Colombia 1971  
A film by Carlos Alvarez  
Animation Manuel Vargas, Oscar Beltra  
Voices Humberto Martinez Salcedo  
Music Blas Emilio Atehortua  
41 mins / B&W / 16mm  
English subtitles.

Carlos Alvarez investigates democracy as practised in Colombia over the last forty years. In an opening animation sequence, he ridicules the protective role of the USAF in 'stamping out subversion' and all the forces of the Colombian establishment who allow their government to be manipulated by 'Uncle Sam'. With the use of stills, and also - from 1951 onwards - of some news footage, Alvarez parades one president after another, demonstrating the emergence of a two-party oligarchy which tells the enfranchised people: 'This is your candidate - elect him'. The July 1970 election (the first since 1954) is studied in detail: four candidates ran, none of them representing the people: the results were fixed in advance by the ruling National Front Party, and 50% of the population abstained from voting, despite intimidation by those with a vested interest in promoting 'democratic' elections in which the candidates were controlled. A year later, only the bourgeoisie and 'Yankee-loving, marihuana-smoking' young rich students had benefitted from the election. Alvarez concludes that revolution is the only democratic option left to the Colombian working class - and the only true form of democracy.

Victoria Wegg-Prosser  
MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

In July 1972 there was a wave of arrests in Colombia, after a clash between army troops and the National Liberation Army (ELN) led

by Fabio Vasquez. Later the army announced that the coded files of Fabio Vasquez had been captured and that these contained the names of the 'urban network' of the ELN. Consequently, several people, including Carlos and Julia Alvarez were detained and accused of collaboration with the ELN. They were arrested by the Colombian Military Police and harshly interrogated. They were charged with the following: Association to commit a crime, intention to kidnap, falsification of documents, hiding pursued political dissidents, making subversive films, etc.

Carlos Alvarez spent nearly two years in prison. The Military tried on many occasions to conduct a secret tribunal, but due to international and national protests the trial could not be conducted with the secrecy originally intended. The tribunal was suspended several times until - after the lifting of the 'state of seige' in connection with the presidential election - the civil courts took over and released all the defendants pending the very end of the trial. Carlos Alvarez was conditionally released in February 1974.

"The nineteen months I have spent in prison have deprived me of all possibilities to make films - at least for the time being. The entire infra-structure we had so laboriously built up for our work - the technical equipment, the distribution system and the financing - none of that exists anymore. And who will make loans to alleged extremists? Or to political films? I only have to open my mouth and say something against the 'democratic' system in Colombia, and I must expect to be re-arrested."

Carlos Alvarez, July 1974



# SLON

WORKING CLASS  
CINEMA IN FRANCE

GUY HENNEBELLE

The French film industry was severely shaken by the events of May '68 which led to the formation of *Les Etats Generaux du Cinema*, an informal organization of writers, directors and technicians which declared its solidarity with the striking workers and students and stated its intention to re-structure the film industry in order to create "a cinema free from political and economic imperialisms." Divergent interests soon tore apart the organization and today most French film-makers have returned to traditional cinema at best, they try through the directors' guild, the *Société des Réalisateurs des Films*, to promote a reformist policy within the existing production-distribution-exploitation system. But their policy doesn't question the political and cultural conditions that govern film-making in France, it aims only to improve the working conditions of the film-makers themselves within a framework of democratic—in its widest sense—options. The most notable aspect of the heritage of '68 on the French film scene today, besides the politicization of several film magazines, is the existence of a number of militant film-making collectives.

SLON—*Société pour le Lancement d'Oeuvres Nouvelles* (Society for the Distribution of New Works)—was founded and organized by 51 year-old Chris Marker (director of films such as *DIMANCHE A PEKIN*, *LE JOLI MAI*, *CUBA SI!*, etc., he insists on being approached only as a member of the group). So far, SLON has produced, and helped to produce, more films than any other militant group. A larger number of technicians and film-makers work within SLON than any of the other groups. It is also the only group that has created regional workers' film groups: the Medvedkin Group at Besancon and the Sochaux Group at Sochaux.

SLON was interviewed, collectively and anonymously, in Paris in February '72 by Guy Hennebelle. The interview, translated by Catherine Ham and John Mathews, originally appeared in the March 3-9 issue of *Time Out* (London; copyright by Time Out Limited).

**Q: How was SLON formed?**

**A:** May '68 gave the group its impetus but it was really formed in '67. In fact it grew out of two experiences, two films: on the one hand, *FAR FROM VIETNAM*, and on the other, *SEE YOU SOON*.

*FAR FROM VIETNAM* was a film made specifically as a protest against American aggression. It consisted of several sketches directed by Claude Lelouch, William Klein, Rui Guerra, Agnes Varda, Alain Resnais, Michele Rey and Godard. It involved the concentrated efforts of some 150 technicians. It was a kind of test case—people were united through good will in an attempt to illustrate the struggle against the continuation of the Vietnam war. We think the film was a failure, mainly because the good will often concealed guilty consciences. Some took part to absolve themselves but without attempting to question either their method of working or the kind

of films they were making within the commercial production/distribution system. As a result of this collaboration between two different kinds of film-makers, *FAR FROM VIETNAM* ended up, in our opinion, a total failure. It was marked by confusion, conceit, dominated by individualistic points of view. In some ways Godard's was the most interesting sequence because he coped honestly with his conscience and explained that he couldn't make a film on Vietnam because of his bourgeois cultural conditioning. And this admission of impotence was interesting. Yet the film had an impact in the States that can't be disregarded...

However that's as may be, it turned out that only the technicians stayed with SLON: the big names for the most part went back to making their films as before. We went through a process of selection, distillation.

The other key experience was in '67, the making of *SEE YOU SOON*. There was a strike at the Rhodiaceta factory near Besancon, a factory controlled by the Rhone-Poulenc Trust which employed some 3,000 workers in Besancon. Characterized by the occupation of buildings and violent clashes with the police, it was one of the major pre-'68 strikes. Chris Marker, Mario Maret, Bonfanti and some others went to the factory and participated in the workers' action. They felt that there was a need for films on the working class struggle to give it some much-needed publicity. It was one of the first occasions since 1945 that film-makers had actually gone to a factory and offered to put film at the disposal of the workers. As opposed to *FAR FROM VIETNAM*, the experience of making *SEE YOU SOON* was a very positive one. You could argue that it led to the formation of three militant film-making groups, in fact: Dziga Vertov, as Godard also went to the Rhodiaceta factory; Dynadia, through the participation of Mario Maret; and SLON through the involvement of Chris Marker. So it was the experience of making *SEE YOU SOON* that finally led to the formation of SLON.

**Q: What is the relationship of the Medvedkin group to SLON?**





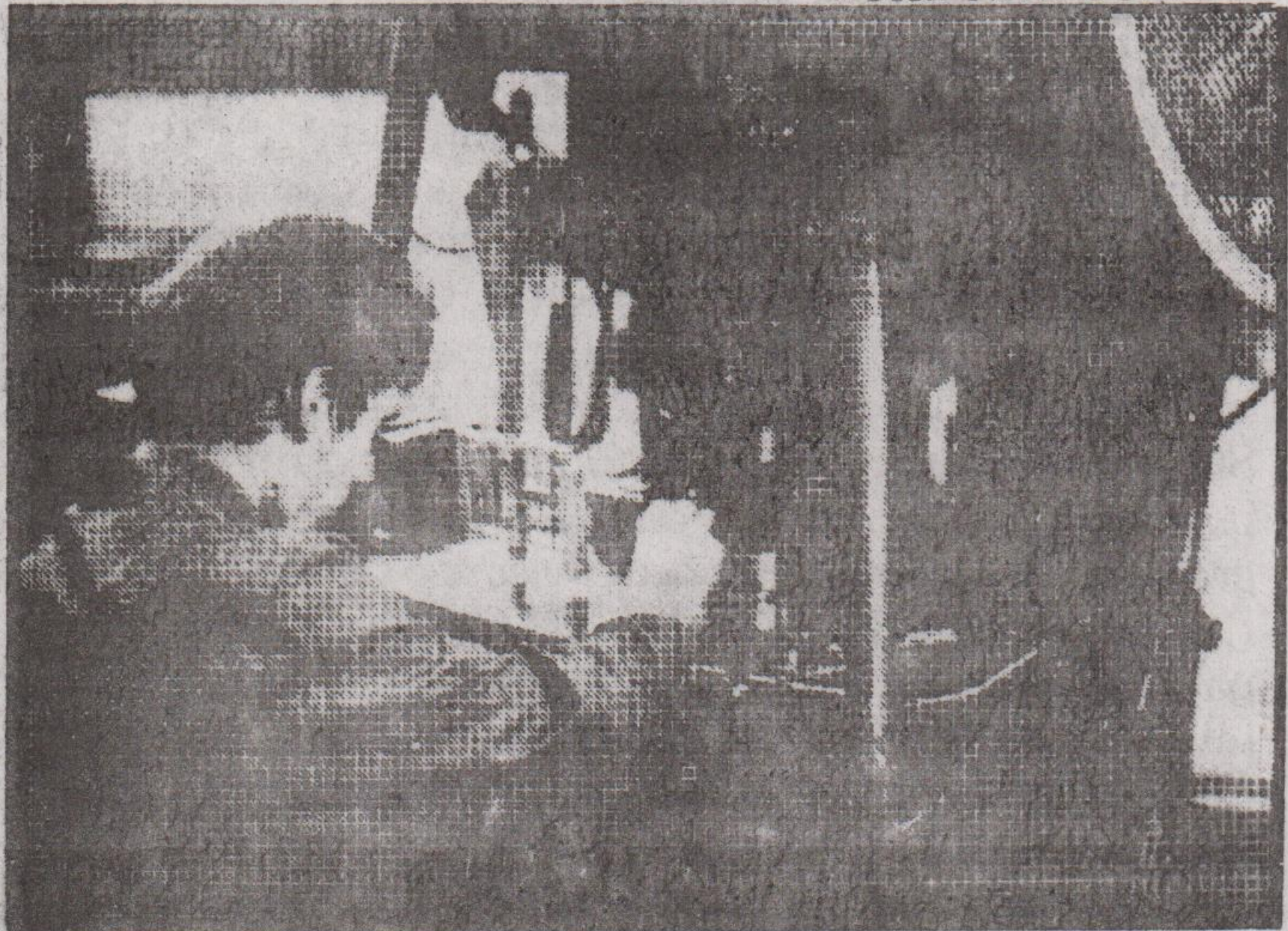
The Medvedkin Group at Besancon

A: Once SEE YOU SOON was finished, Chris Marker showed it to the workers who felt that though the making of the film was a positive step, they weren't entirely happy with it. They thought that the approach was still that of an outsider, it was still in that sense ethnographic. Then Marker suggested that they form a collective themselves to make films to show things as they felt to be from their own experience. So we gave, or lent, them cameras over several weekends, and showed them how to use the equipment. About ten workers took part. They made a series of three films ironically titled THE NEW SOCIETY—a phrase used by the French Prime Minister Chaban Delmas to confuse people about the reactionary nature of his politics. They also made various other films.

Q: What was the follow-up to the experience of making SEE YOU SOON?

A: A worker at the Rhodiaceta factory, Pol Cebe, organized a 37-minute film, THE CLASS STRUGGLE. We see it as being very different from our film. The problems of everyday militancy are described from within. It was said that the film was de-mobilizing because it insisted on the unrewarding side of daily action, but that side too needs to be shown. Intellectuals tended to criticize a sequence

THE NEW SOCIETY



that was included on the concept of culture in a working class environment. Of course Marker wouldn't have shown it in the same way, but you must realize that a French worker's contact with culture must in the long run lead through Prevert and Picasso, even if one day he has to attack this bourgeois conditioning for what it is. It was also said that THE CLASS STRUGGLE was workers' Marker; maybe it's partly true, from the point of view of form, perhaps, but the content is quite different.

Q: And how was the group that shot WEEKEND AT SOCHAUX formed?

A: One of the organizers of the Medvedkin Group in Besancon moved to Sochaux and started a group there. Now they choose the kinds of films they want to make and just call on SLON for technical help. At the moment they seem to be going through a transitional phase. And they are burdened with heavy financial problems.

Q: What is the political basis for your co-operation with the workers at Besancon and Sochaux?

A: The workers belong to the Union (the General Confederation of Labor) but they film as individuals. They don't work through the union. Their groups are very open. They say their role is not to find solutions. What they are doing at the moment is attacking the "new society."

Q: In general do your films use the methods of direct cinema or do they tend to use fictional elements at all?

A: Most are direct cinema but some fictional elements are introduced, more as a kind of cinematic text than as narrative. There's never any question of using psychological drama.

Q: Coming back to SLON itself, how is the group organized?

A: It is extremely flexible. Its basis is a co-operative of some eleven people, film-makers and others. You simply become a member by working with us. There is no membership card. Some people work with us for six months then leave. Others stay longer, once again there's nothing formal. Some of our technicians work on commercial productions as well as with us but none of the directors do. We are saddled with permanent financial problems. The initial capital came from selling SEE YOU SOON, then we made four films on workers' struggles in France which we managed to sell to foreign television. I must stress foreign because the Gaullist ORTF won't buy anything from us. Television is our only genuine source of finance, mainly the third channel of West German, Belgian and Swiss TV. Italy bought some films earlier on but this seems to be coming to an end. We sold a few films to Quebec. We haven't had any offers from East Europe yet but we have been invited to Hungary. Our film about the Agit Trains dedicated to Medvedkin, the Soviet director who made HAPPINESS and who gave his name to the Besancon film-makers group, has created some interest there in Bulgaria, for instance.

Q: How many films have you produced or helped to complete?

A: About fifty. Most are 16mm, black and white shorts. There are six feature films: IMPOSTURE



(Herve Pernot), BATTLE FOR THE TEN MILLION (Chris Marker), PANO WON'T HAPPEN (Jaeggi and Roos), AND A THOUSAND HOPES (Derois, They, Bonfanti, Maury), THE LEAST GESTURE (Fernand Deligny) and WEEKEND AT SOCHAUX that we spoke about. We also discovered Medvedkin's remarkable film HAPPINESS which had been forgotten since it was made in 1934. We added a soundtrack (it was silent) and now distribute it with an interview with Medvedkin, THE AGIT TRAIN.

Q: *And distribution?*

A: At first we naturally went to the more or less alternative cultural outlets like film societies, youth clubs, workers' centers, local committees, political parties and movements of various kinds. After May '68 it was still very difficult to show political films on the commercial distribution circuit. We need to show our films to everyone who could possibly help. Little by little we seem to be coming closer to getting onto the commercial circuit. We are doing our best to achieve this; we don't see why we should isolate ourselves from our wide potential audience by any kind of purist attitude—we have to fight in all areas, on all fronts.

Q: *What is your budget for a short film?*

A: Very small, around 20,000NF [about \$4,000].

Q: *Do you have a particular political line? What kind of cinema are you trying to create?*

A: Let's answer the second part first. We make political films: first point. But we don't make *auteur* films: second point. We want to let people speak for themselves, and even film themselves with their own cameras wherever possible—people, like workers, for instance, who have never been allowed to express themselves under the prevailing political system. And thirdly, we want to make films that stick close to reality; this is what differentiates us from, for instance, the Dziga Vertov group.

Do we have a political position? SLON is, of course, a left-wing group, but we are not sectarian. We are open to several progressive currents, and we include several tendencies. There is no one person who lays down the line at SLON. It is impossible to outline a precise position. If we make a film about a strike of course, we discuss the orientation with the strikers involved. There is plenty of discussion. But we don't think the solution to the strategic or ideological problems we face today will come from the cinema.

Q: *Would you agree that generally your films can be defined as progressive films that criticize but that rarely point out a path or a line of action that needs to be followed?*

A: No, that doesn't cover what we are doing. Let us say that we at SLON are still functioning at the level of research. We have no line defined beyond a general anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist one. Let us say that within SLON a majority of us looks at problems in similar ways. Basically, we work for the rank and file struggle of the working class. We do not work for a particular organization. The line will emerge from our basis in the working class, from the workers themselves. It's not our job to provide it. Perhaps

there will be divergencies of opinion among us on a precise issue. We don't know. For the moment we are trying to discover it through militant action.

Q: *Are you trying to evolve a new cinematic language?*

A: We're very interested in this, but as opposed to the Dziga Vertov group, for instance, we don't think new forms can just appear from nowhere, from research done in a laboratory. They can only arise out of working patiently with the people whose ambitions and preoccupations we are attempting to express. A form does not exist in itself, only in relation to content. We have to know what it is that we want to say first, and then find better ways of saying it.

Q: *Do the workers involved in your films have any control over them?*

A: Well, take WEEKEND AT SOCHAUX for instance. We worked the film out with the workers for whom it was made. That's how we developed the plot. We brought our technical know-how and our ideas, the workers brought their ideas and the reality itself. The film was built from the very beginning on this collaboration. It was more difficult with the editing. You can't avoid the technical side and it is impossible to have everyone involved. We showed the workers the rushes frame by frame, then discussed the cutting three times with a small group.





# IRELAND: BEHIND THE WIRE

G.B. 1974  
 Made by the Berwick Street  
 Collective  
 100 mins approx. B&W 16mm

FRIDAY 4 NOVEMBER 7.30



# IRELAND: BEHIND THE WIRE

G.B. 1974  
Made by the Berwick Street Collective  
100 mins approx. B&W 16mm

On November 21st, 1974, two bombs exploded in two Birmingham pubs, leaving 21 people dead and many wounded. The anger of working people in Britain was real, immediate, and understandable. The deaths, and similar terrorist attacks, must be condemned. But they have to be understood, rather than used against Irish people in general. To be understood they have to be explained. Socialist organisations, even though divided, must take up this task. They will have to expose those things which have made most British people prejudiced against the Irish, and which have led to their almost total ignorance of the origins of the conflict in the North, and the conduct of the British in the province over many, many years.

This film was made with two limited aims in mind. First, to remind us of the reasons why the Civil Rights movement in the North in 1968/1969 had such support and was pursued so fearlessly by working class people: that with Partition in 1922, Ulster became the Orange State—governed on behalf of the British through the Protestant supremacist ruling class and the Unionist and Orange organisations; that the Catholics, suddenly a minority within this state, found themselves denied full representation, and worse, denied work on a massive scale. Second, to expose once and for all the violently repressive role of the British Army, to put an end to the vicious myth of 'peace keeping' in Northern Ireland.

We chose to show these things through the eyes and words of working class people in Derry and Belfast. Since these are the people who receive, day after day, the worst of British Army assaults and harassment, and whose resistance therefore has to be day to day and often violent, it will not be surprising if many British people find the film shocking in parts, to the extent of seeming exaggerated and propagandist—both in its portrayal of army brutality, and in the attempt to describe the hopes for an end to sectarianism and exploitation voiced throughout the film by working class Catholics. If it appears so, it can only be because for much more than the last five years, the British press and television have maintained a conspiracy of silence about the real events in Northern Ireland, a silence so total that most people in Britain and the Irish Republic are completely unaware of it.

Anthony Smith, one-time servant of a major news corporation, ex-editor of the '24 Hours' programme says this about censorship: "In Northern Ireland, to raise the question of equality of opportunity in jobs, education, and council housing before the growth of the Civil Rights movement, was to be inflammatory. One of the means whereby the Province was held together was silence on the part of the media. For Radio and Television, to report on (Ulster's) internal affairs, using the normal and ethical social terms of reference of the rest of Britain in the 1950's and 1960's was con-



sidered a breach of broadcasting neutrality." Until the Unionist state began its violent attack against the Civil Rights marchers in the summer and autumn of 1969, and then against the heart of the Catholic ghettos themselves, Northern Ireland for all intents and purposes did not exist for the British people. For one brief period, August 1969, and during the first weeks of Free Derry, British reporters and camera crews walked the streets of Derry and Belfast with their eyes open, and even reported the resistance of the Bogside against police and B-Special attacks, from behind the people's barricades. For one brief moment, we were allowed to hear working class Catholics and Protestants describe the conditions in which they lived, and the attacks that they were suffering. The result could not be stifled—a wave of sympathy in Britain for the oppressed Catholic minority. This sympathy was used with the utmost effect by the British Labour Government of the time, to soften the militancy of the Catholics, and to smooth the way for the arrival of the British Army. Our sympathy was now used to blackmail the Catholic community into accepting the control of the British Army over vital areas of their lives. The defence of Catholic homes was turned into the encirclement of the Catholic areas. The B-Specials may have found it harder to get in—but the Catholics found it increasingly difficult to get out. The germ of working class revolt had been put into quarantine. All that remained was to find ways of wiping it out. Rarely has the role of British Press and Television been so clear. Once the Army was in, they became the most blatant mouthpieces for government propaganda. On the one hand they told us in Britain that our sympathy was being abused by the Catholic communities; on the other telling them that *our* patience and goodwill was running out.

When the Catholics became more and more isolated behind the ring of Army barbed wire and checkpoints, so our only intermediaries became the press—not just judge and jury, but interpreter as well.

As Catholic and Republican resistance against the increasing physical domination of the Army

grew, the press and television withdrew from these areas, and the second phase of censorship began, broken only by the most sensational events, and in the most distorted form.

But information has not just been suppressed—news has to be produced, and has to be created when necessary. The justification for the 'bi-partisan' policy of Conservative and Labour governments requires that the Army be seen in a 'peace-keeping' role. Army colonels, trained in news reporting techniques, appear on our screens every week, blotting out our questions with bland lies. When in doubt our reporters turn to the Army. The lie of peace-keeping is maintained, because it is the Army itself that reports on itself, and on the people too. In this way the press and television have become the parasites of the Army. To justify their role, they must justify the role of the Army. To reveal any part of the truth of the last five years would not only destroy their credibility, but would reveal the real anti-working class basis of the policies practised by Tory and Labour governments alike—and the true role of the Army. So each time the Press and television review the last five years, that history becomes more unreal and remote.

What we do not hear is what words like 'peace keeping' and 'civilisation' mean, under army occupation. Civilisation means the continuous daily violence of living in crumbling houses, with leaking roofs, rats running over the floors, roads broken up by army trucks, street lighting smashed by army patrols, no pubs left to speak of, where unemployment is the rule, hunger a habit, and deprivation a culture. The Protestant and Catholic ghettos have become a series of concentration camps dressed up as Coronation Street.

The Army, understanding its function all too well, sees every sign of poverty as a probable source of rebellion or resistance, and thus search and detain anyone who is poor and tries to rise two inches above his knees. The ghettos are locked in by army posts, supervised by constant patrols, informed on by snoopers, watched through binoculars, filmed by army cameras, analysed by intelligence units. There is a file on every face in every street. The walls of army

intelligence units are lined with photographs that would do credit to a social anthropologist—mothers, brothers, fathers, friends, cousins, nieces, in doorways, walking down streets, in playgrounds, coming out of school—who talks to who, who plays with who, who resists, who leads, who supports. And still, as during the Civil Rights period, resistance is maintained. Whitelaw and Rees call it thug-gery, madness. We call it normality—the normality of working class resistance to continuous grinding oppression.

It was against this background that 'Ireland: Behind the Wire' was made. Started in August 1969, and continued whenever time and money allowed during the next four years, both in Derry and Belfast, it became clear early on that for British and Southern Irish people to understand anything about events in the North, they had to understand the reality of army occupation; that somehow, through the blanket of censorship and twisted reporting, people had to understand what the experience of army occupation is in Britain for working class people. Secondly, they had to understand what it was that the army was trying to smash. Thus in the first part of the film, the origins of republicanism and of resistance to British rule are described. In the second part, army occupation, internment, and civil resistance.

We acknowledge that the film has many weaknesses. It does not cover the experience of the Protestant working class. The reasons for this are important to note. What started off as a record of the Civil Rights movement at a time of confrontation carried on after August 1969 into a record of its development in Free Derry. During this period, the dominance of the British Army began to build up, and gradually the resistance of the Catholic communities to it. Very soon, we were caught up in the predicament of the Catholic areas in which we worked; that is, trapped by the army and by Protestant reaction against Catholic resistance. It became, by late 1970, virtually impossible to work outside the Catholic areas.

The film reflects the realities of life in Catholic areas during the period. It also reflects our own failure to understand, which was a common failure at the time, that the Protestants could not be ignored. To that extent, the army had won.

But we believe that the film is a powerful blow against censorship, but raises again, and more urgently, the necessity for this wall of silence to be broken. Unless it is broken, the British working class will not acknowledge the plight of their fellows in Ireland. British journalists have given in without a fight, without a law being passed. Pressure for overt censorship is increasing, as is the pressure to extend the repressive apparatus so carefully assembled in the North over to Britain. The Terrorism Act was intended to cause panic and confusion, and has partly succeeded. It is essential to fight at once against repression and censorship in Northern Ireland, and against its extension to the rest of Britain.

**BERWICK STREET FILM COLLECTIVE**





# THE BATTLE OF CHILE PARTS 1&2

Patrizio Guzman Ph. Jorge Muller  
Chile-Cuba/1973-5/CIUB  
Part 1 106 mins. Part 2 99 mins

FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER 6.30



## Battle of Chile

**THE BATTLE OF CHILE** is a major documentary on the Chilean experience in three feature-length sections. The project was begun in 1973, and a third part is still being completed.

Patricio Guzman shot the whole of his film with a team of six people constantly on the spot with as many cameras and recorders.

"This film is the first work of art in a new way of analysing politics. It is a history lesson that has never before been achieved in the cinema."

(Le Monde)

### **THE BATTLE OF CHILE, PART ONE: THE INSURRECTION OF THE BOURGEOISIE**

(La Lucha de un Pueblo Sin Armas)

Patricio Guzman, Equipo Tercer Año-ICAIC - Chris Marker

Chile-Cuba/1973-5/106 mins/CLUB

"A detailed analysis of events between the lorry-drivers' strike in October 1972 and the attack of the Moneda Palace in September '73. The elections are coming up, Guzman and his crew let both supporters and opponents of the Popular Unity have a chance to speak. Their replies are a poem of their own, a true commentary on the situation in Chile on the eve of the take-over by the Junta."

(Le Monde)

### **THE BATTLE OF CHILE, PART TWO: THE COUP D'ETAT**

(El Golpe de Estado)

Patricio Guzman

Chile-Cuba/1973-5/99 mins/CLUB

Part two organises varied documentary material - film of State occasions, workers' meetings, Parliamentary sessions - into a detailed analysis of the ten weeks leading up to the coup. It shows the turmoil on the left as militants struggle to develop the best way of defending Popular Unity from the imminent right-wing offensive. Part Two begins where Part One left off - with probably the most extraordinary piece of documentary footage to come out of the Chilean crisis

"Allende, Allende el pueblo te defiende," chanted the massed ranks of Popular Unity supporters in Santiago. Within weeks their leader was to lie dead in the bombed ruins of Moneda Palace, the victim of a right-wing coup which the Marxist president's followers found themselves powerless to resist.

Patricio Guzman's three-part documentary (the third is still being completed), retraces the tense last months of Allende's government as it tried to push its socialist programme through the vetoes of Congress and the opposition's orchestrated campaign of economic disruption.

Allende's answer to each new crisis was to call his supporters out on the streets in massive, thrilling rallies of reaffirmation, rallies that finally taught the bourgeoisie their

## Batalla de Chile, la lucha de un pueblo sin armas, La (The Battle of Chile, the fight of an unarmed people)

Chile, 1974/75

Director: Patricio Guzman

*Dist*—The Other Cinema. *p.c*—Equipo Tercer Año. With the collaboration of Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematograficos and Chris Marker. *p. manager*—Federico Elton. *asst. d*—José Pino. *sc*—Patricio Guzman. *ph*—Jorge Müller. *ed*—Pedro Chaskel. *sd*—Bernardo Menz. *advisers*—Marta Harnecker, Julio Garcia Espinoza. *collaborators*—Paloma Guzman, Lilian Indseth, Gaston Ancelovici, Angelina Vasquez, Armindo Cardoso, Juan José Mendi, Grupo Iskra, Estudios H&S. 7,380 ft. 205 mins. (In two parts: 1: LA INSURRECCION DE LA BURGUESIA [THE INSURRECTION OF THE BOURGEOISIE], 3,816 ft. 106 mins.; 2: EL GOLPE DE ESTADO [THE COUP D'ETAT], 3,564 ft. 99 mins.). (16 mm.). English commentary and subtitles.

*The Battle of Chile* is a Marxist analysis of the overthrow of Salvador Allende's Chilean government by the political right; as such, it makes no specious pretence to objectivity. Its structure, however, qualifies it as the most informative documentary on the subject and the one which, strangely, may provide a picture (as opposed to an analysis of that picture) acceptable to both ends of the political spectrum. This quality rests on several factors: a comprehensiveness that permits exploration of key events leading to the coup; a commentary whose political commitment is so unequivocal that it acknowledges that this is a 'complete' analysis only in the terms of these Chilean film-makers. Beyond the overlaid commentary, one becomes aware of another, increasingly tense dialogue taking place within the film—between the makers themselves and the people participating. Footage of street interviews, factory discussion and a TV clash between left and right (which transcends parody in a terrifyingly hilarious spiral of non-comprehension) reflects the true debate involving the people, the government and, indeed, the constitution itself. Consequently the viewer is honestly exposed to the weakness and vacillation of both left and right, but is also made aware of a country at such a crucial stage in its development, and in the polarisation of opinion, that the images overwhelmingly convey the inexorable collapse of democracy. We are confronted with scenes from a tortured country, where there is much frantic activity at night, where there is both fanaticism and complacency, and people are forever gathering together but not always moving in the same direction.

SCOTT MEEK

lesson; that Allende would not be shifted from power by 'fair' means.

The day after the fascist-backed strike of the copper miners was finally crushed, one small section of the army took revenge in an embarrassing prelude to the coup. It might have been overlooked if an Argentinian cameraman had not been there to record the incident - and his own death. While he kept bravely shooting at the soldiers as they spilled out of the back of a lorry, two of them calmly took aim and shot him down - remarkable footage that becomes no less shocking with familiarity.

**THE BATTLE OF CHILE** is a searing indictment of collusion against democracy between the opposition, the CIA and the armed forces. Yet the documentary's down-beat, somewhat ironic style works best when Guzman and his crew interview supporters of Popular Unity and the opposition parties in the run-up to the 1973 congressional election. No ballot box could have smothered the flames of class hatred that his interviews reveal."



# CHILE

## The formation of cinema in Chile

The economic structures of the media differ from each other in various ways. These differences correspond to the different ways in which capital is able, in each of them, to exert control over the product or the programming. But this is connected with the fact that in each case there is something idiosyncratic about the raw materials or the type of commodity produced.

In the case of the press, for example, one of the raw materials is presumably news. One is inclined at first to think that news is like air: simply there for the taking. However, like every other raw material, it has to be processed before it can become a commodity within the industrial division of labour, and this begins in the act of gathering the news itself. In his interview below, Mattelart describes some of the ideological issues which are involved here, in relation to the fact that established journalistic practice already at this level produces a

shaping of the news which does not correspond to the political needs of the masses. Elsewhere he has pointed out that especially with the internationalisation of the press, those who make their business from news gathering acquire a monopoly position in spite of the fact that news itself is not a raw material which suffers from any kind of scarcity value. He is speaking, of course, of the powerful positions of the big agencies, UPI (United Press International), AP (Associated Press), Reuters and France-Presse. The world represented in the newspapers is shaped by them in many ways. Each day, for example, AP transmits by teletype on average 100,000 words of reports from European countries; 65,000 from the Far East; and only 60,000 from Latin America, Africa, South-East Asia and the Near East.<sup>18</sup>

In the case of radio and television, something which frequently escapes notice is that programmes themselves are not necessarily commodities in the strict sense. Strictly speaking, a commodity, according to Marx, is something with both a use-value and an exchange-value in which the use-value carries the exchange-value. But without an exchange-value, the use-value alone is not a commodity. Therefore radio and television programmes are not commodities in the strict sense unless they are bought or sold. Often they are not. Apart from such special cases as pay-tv, they are not commodities from the listeners' or viewers' point of view, if all they have to do is buy a set and turn it on. It is the set which is the commodity. (In the case of gramophone records, the record itself obviously is a commodity, but if the piece of music recorded is in the public domain, then the piece of music isn't.) Nor are broadcast programmes commodities from the point of view of the production companies unless they sell them to other companies or have to buy them in. But there is in broadcasting a completely immaterial commodity which can be sold for the purpose of financing the company and accumulating capital, and that is *air-space* – in the form of space for commercials or by means of sponsorship. But there are other ways of financing broadcast companies. Public service companies often raise their money *indirectly* from the consumer market by means of licence fees. (One radio station in New York, WBAI, is financed by voluntary public subscription.) Unless the manufacturers of broadcast equipment (hardware) are also manufacturers of programme material (software) – or tied in with them – they may even be indifferent to the form of ownership of the programme companies. Whatever the form of ownership, the companies still constitute a market for their products. Mattelart mentions in his interview that Chilean television was set up as a basically non-commercial structure, which was unusual for Latin America. In a situation of economic imperialism like Chile it may even be an advantage if the companies are public service since it is likely that the State will be unable to raise sufficient finances for them indirectly from the consumer market and will therefore be forced to rely on deficit financing. This on the one hand only increases its reliance on foreign debt, while at the same time it forces the programme companies to obtain as many ready-made programmes as possible from abroad. The imperialising companies can of course provide the programmes more cheaply than they can be produced locally.

\* Inhabitant of a *poblacion*, which is the Chilean word for a township.



When we turn to cinema, we find that the film is an object of exchange-value, which produces a direct income from the consumer. The exchange-value consists in the price paid for admission. But the film is not like a gramophone record. It doesn't physically change hands. And there is still a peculiarity here. We shall see this more clearly if we go back to Marx once more. Marx says that considered as an exchange-value a commodity is a *non-use-value* to its owner, because he is not interested in its use-value as such. For him, the use-value lies only in its exchange-value. The use-value is alienated from the seller's point of view, because it is only a *means to an end* – the exchange-value. So in order for its value to be realised, it must first realise its exchange-value. As Marx puts it:

To become a use-value, the commodity must encounter the particular need which it can satisfy. Thus the use-values of commodities become use-values by a mutual exchange of places: they pass from the hands of those for whom they were means of exchange into the hands of those for whom they serve as consumer goods.<sup>19</sup>

But the peculiarity of film (in which, it is true, it is not unique) is that *it does not need physically to change hands*. The owner for whom it serves as an exchange-value never need let go of it to realise the exchange-value. What he sells, legally, is the right of admission to view it. But this accounts for the whole structure of ownership and control in the film industry, because if there is no need for the commodity to pass physically into the hands of the consumer, there is also no reason why the owner – the distributor – should let its ownership pass into the hands of the exhibitor when he can rent it to him instead, when he can make some kind of contractual agreement which gives the exhibitor rights of exhibition without rights of ownership. If you go back to the early history of cinema, you will discover that the accumulation of capital by the distributors, which eventually led to their domination over production as well as over exhibition, began when they hit on the device of film rental.

(You cannot really make sense of the way cinema works aesthetically and ideologically unless you ground the analysis in these economic conditions. I don't mean to deny in any way the aesthetic and ideological aspects of film. Obviously, while the material form of the film doesn't change hands, there is *something* which the viewer receives and takes away – content, message, sign-value. But, first, these are precisely aspects of the *use-value*, not the exchange-value. They are what *carry* the exchange-value. Secondly, they themselves are carried by something material – you fall into an idealist trap if you forget this: in the language of information theory, every 'bit' of information is carried by a unit of matter or energy. And this matter-energy constitutes the material object in which the capitalist invests his exchange-value. So whatever control he can establish over content comes from the control he establishes over the object itself; and that involves, as I have argued elsewhere,\* control over the process of production, the labour process. Examination of the labour-process reveals

certain things which limit the control the capitalist can achieve, but if it nevertheless takes on a form which answers in some measure to the requirements which the distributors put on it, because they are the major bankers for production money, this is because the peculiar nature of film as a commodity enabled them to establish their domination in the first place.)

What the exhibitor provides is an infrastructure – the cinemas – for the distribution of goods produced under mandate from the distributor. The cinemas are generally owned by the national bourgeoisie. The distributors are thus relieved of the responsibility of constructing the cinemas themselves, and at the same time local capital has to pay out for the cost of plant and equipment. In their dealings with local producers as well as exhibitors, the distributors rely on another peculiarity of film: the fact that the cost of manufacturing copies for distribution is almost infinitesimal in relation to actual costs of production. This means that prints can be exported without depriving the home market, so that the greater part, if not all, of the costs of production are recovered on the home market, and foreign income is virtually all pure profit. Before the US domestic market began to contract with the growth of television, the US distributors could even afford to undermine local producers in dependent countries by undercutting them, adding to the advantage they already had in dealing with relatively small markets like Chile, which comes from the fact that local producers cannot afford the lavish budgets needed to make their product competitive with Hollywood, and that they suffer from a relative lack of access to other markets.

All this adds up to virtual monopoly control of the market by the distributors. They used their position in Chile, as reports from *Variety* included below in Appendix III demonstrate, to try and sabotage cinema under Popular Unity by restricting the supply of films. Reports on the films being shown in Santiago during 1973 suggest that the choice was pretty narrow, so it appears that the imperialists' offensive had some success. The Government tried to remedy this by bringing in films from Eastern Europe and from Cuba, and to take cinemas over into a state-run circuit (in the charge of the state company, Chile Films). But this policy was piecemeal. It was bound to have only restricted success as long as state intervention in cinema was limited to competition with the capitalist sector and the monopoly distributors were not confronted directly. Meanwhile, the most vocal critics of the situation were sometimes those sectors of the bourgeoisie which felt deprived of 'quality art' movies.

It may be surprising, given this structure, to realise that Chilean film production actually dates back to the early twenties if not before. However, the point is that the structure was not introduced by Hollywood as a *fait accompli* any more than the US invented economic imperialism. Cinema had already arrived in Latin America in quite a significant way before the First World War; in other words, before US world domination of the film industry was properly established. Moreover, just as in the countries where cinema originated, it was aimed in Chile, from the start, at the working class. (The reasons why cinema established itself from the outset as a working class

\* In *Labour Power in the Film Industry*, BFI, 1976.



entertainment are beyond the scope of this essay.) Figures contained in the British trade annual, *The Kinematograph Year Book*, testify that cinemas had been opened in major industrial or mining centres not only in Chile but even, for example, in fairly remote parts of Bolivia. (Thus, at the beginning of 1916, there were cinemas in Santiago, Valparaiso, Antofagasta, Coquimbo, La Serena, Tal-Tal, Los Andes, Huasco, and Calama; and in Bolivia, in La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Oruro, Guaqui, Sorata and Uyuni. The smallest of these locations were Huasco, with a population of only 6000, and Sorata, with 5000. At the beginning of 1917 the actual number of cinemas in Valparaiso was 9 although they were not entirely given over to film. Film represented about 70% of their business and prices ranged from 5d to 5s. Santiago had 32 cinemas, although, according to *The Kinematograph Year Book*, only 8 or 9 of these could be termed first class. They had a seating capacity of 18,000. By comparison, Montevideo in Uruguay had 54 cinemas with seating for 27,200 and Rosario in Argentina had 18.)

We know little of early Chilean film production except the figures: some 80 features were made before 1931, almost half of them between 1925 and 1927. (The whole figure is equal to Chilean film production since then up to the end of the sixties.) The economic basis of this production was pretty haphazard, but Chile here was in the same situation as many other countries, including several smaller European countries. It was able to sustain some kind of film production in spite of the growing power of Hollywood, first of all for a variety of economic reasons: silent production was relatively cheap and easy; since the production process had not yet developed very much sophistication or even very much division of labour, it could be carried out on the basis of available local resources even though these were pretty restricted.

It may also be that it was impractical even for the North Americans to deny the need of 'primitive' audiences – 'primitive' in the sense that all early film audiences are – to satisfy their naïve fascination by seeing something at least of their own country on the screen. This of course is what most local producers principally exploit, as we see in the continuing stream of 'local colour' melodramas and comedies produced in Argentina and Mexico. And perhaps this is especially true after the coming of the talkies, in the case of comedies, which are more difficult to export than other cinematic forms, particularly where they depend on a play of language.

The arrival of the talkies seems to have been a serious set-back for Chilean film production which only began to revive after a gap of three or four years, and received a further impulse when the Popular Front social democrat government, under Aguirre Cerda, came to power in 1938. In 1940, this Government created Chile Films, a state-owned studio and facilities company designed to promote production by servicing independent producers. It was conceived in the same way as CORFO, the state Corporation for the Development of Production. One of the first directors of CORFO, which was established at about the same time, said:

I can tell you that never has the Corporation interfered with private ... initiative. It is in particular the industrialists themselves which very often,

not always, seek the form in which the Corporation may help them. The cases in which they themselves have sought association with the Corporation are innumerable; but never has the Corporation come to control the business which it aids or in which it participates. The Corporation intervenes as a capitalistic partner ...<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately I have not been able to trace the exact relationship between CORFO and Chile Films, but it's clear that there was a relationship, since there was a member of CORFO on the Council for the Promotion of the Film Industry which was set up by the Frei Government in 1967. At the same time, it is clear that the fundamental commercial character of Chile Films remained unaltered throughout. There was no change in 1946 when the Popular Front candidate, Videla, a Radical, was elected with Communist support. But then, when the Communists won one-sixth of the vote in municipal elections five months later, Videla double-crossed them and banned the Communist Party (under the Law for the Defence of Democracy, which was not repealed for several years).

In fact, film production remained spasmodic anyway, since it had in no way been provided with a firm economic base. Chile Films functioned unavoidably in competition with other, privately-owned studios, and the productions which it serviced were of the same character. A good many of them were co-productions with Argentina. The disadvantages to domestic film production continued right through to Popular Unity. In the first place, the market was not a large one. There were 337 cinemas in Chile when Popular Unity came to power. Out of 12 distribution companies, 8 were owned by the North Americans. The cinemas themselves were, as mentioned earlier, in the hands of the national bourgeoisie, individually or in small circuits; in Santiago, 27 out of 31 first-run houses were in the hands of only 2 financial groups. Chilean films themselves were exempted from tax, but the form which this exemption took favoured the exhibitor and the distributor rather than the producer. The exhibitor took 50% of the box office, the distributor 30%, so the film maker received only 20% to cover the cost of the film. The taxation on foreign films was redistributed to domestic producers. However, only 65% of total box office receipts were subject to this tax, so even here the distributors and exhibitors between them retained more than 50%. In other words, domestic production was underdeveloped both because of the small percentage of box office returns which were directly recovered by the producer, and because, in order to achieve the state subsidy which the domestic producer inevitably needed as a result, it was necessary that foreign films should (mis)appropriate almost all the screen time: in fact, about 95%.

The new Chilean film culture which was to challenge this state of affairs began to develop at the end of the 1950s. It can be dated more or less precisely to 1958 and the establishment of the first cineclub at the University of Chile, and soon afterwards the Film Institute at the Catholic University in Santiago. The Communications Department of the University of Chile was established in 1960. It included an experimental department, directed by Sergio Bravo (and after 1967 by Pedro Chaskel). Aldo Francia founded the cineclub of Viña del



Mar in 1962, which by 1967 had developed into the principle Festival for the new Latin American cinema its main focus outside Cuba. How are we to locate this development?

In the first place we have to look back and realise the continuity of mass political struggle in Chile right from the beginning of the century. (Among the films which later recalled it are of course Littin's *La tierra prometida* which, as I recounted above, deals with an episode in the early 1930s which coincided with the short-lived Socialist Government of Marmaduke Grove.) An indicator of the strength of this tradition was the 18% vote which the Communists obtained in the municipal elections in 1947. In 1956, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party (founded in 1933 as a Marxist alternative to the Communists) formed a Popular Action Front (FRAP) which adopted Allende as its presidential candidate in 1958. He lost to the right winger Alessandri by approximately 30,000 votes. Considering his popular support there was no question that he would have won were it not for the disenfranchisement of a large number of people through illiteracy (which in Chile was running at about 20% of the adult population in 1950). It is clear therefore that even before the Cuban Revolution there was in Chile a strong radical atmosphere liable to capture the young intelligentsia.

An important practical factor which was involved was the spread of modern media technology, including the establishment of television in Chile in 1962. As Mattelart points out below, the pattern of Chilean television (different from the commercial pattern of other Latin American countries) gave radical film makers much more opportunity to make films for television than would otherwise be expected. However, the establishment of film departments in the universities even before this was due to the paradoxical conditions of cultural dependency. In the same way, the University of Chile developed the leading drama department in the whole of Latin America, imitating European models, and with facilities and installations which generally exceeded those available in the Santiago theatres, and courses in contemporary European drama and acting styles which there was no possibility of pursuing outside the University. With hardly any authentic theatrical tradition of their own, the Chilean bourgeoisie entertained instead a kind of snobbish desire to imitate whatever was fashionable in Europe. As Soto points out below, although the US has taken over the role of economic imperialism, Europe remained the dominant cultural model in Chile. (Chilean actors now in exile in England who went through this drama department speak of it as a kind of disease of cultural dependency.) In the case of film this meant that such European models as Italian neo-realism, Free Cinema and the Nouvelle Vague had considerable and fashionable influence. Indeed, Helvio Soto, explaining why he made *Caliche sangriento* in the style of a western, said that he wanted to get away from the neo-realism which by 1969 was a dominant style in new Chilean cinema. Although, he said, the Chileans had a cinematic sensibility which was fairly close to that of Italian neo-realism, the Italian original was more astute and structurally more solid.<sup>21</sup> (But then of course, the choice of the western as an alternative model may seem rather strange.)

Most of the story beyond this point is told in the interviews which follow.\* I shall therefore concentrate only on what seem to me to be some of the main themes. First, cultural dependency. The radical film movement began with the realisation of what this meant. But, as Littin explains, it wasn't just an aesthetic affair. On the contrary, cultural dependency is essentially a function of economic conditions, and one of its features is that cultural influences follow the same lines of communication that are established for direct economic purposes: satellite countries communicate much more directly with the metropolitan centres on which they depend than with each other (compare a map of airline routes). Consequently, as Littin says, the new films from elsewhere in Latin America were not actually seen in Chile at the beginning – their reputation came from reviews in European film journals like *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Similarly, the Chilean bourgeoisie began, for the most part, to sit up and take notice of the new Chilean films only when they too were shown in Europe and reports of them filtered back! (The same thing happened in other fields: Violetta Parra, the 'mother' of the New Chilean Song movement, found her first success in Paris.) This explains the great importance of the Viña del Mar film festival, which became not just a focus for the new Chilean cinema, but for the radical film movement of the whole continent.

There is a second aspect of the realisation of the nature of cultural dependency which is perhaps even more important: the demystification of the dominant conception of the nature of film production, its exoticism, the concept of the director as an Artist, and above all the idea that it is necessarily a function of elaborate technological and financial apparatus. It is evident that the new Chilean cinema only got off the ground and discovered its political voice when it discovered that the only way ahead for a political cinema is to change both the relations of production and the relations with the audience.

But film makers achieved no real success in developing new relations with the audience until Allende's election campaign. They formed themselves into a Committee of Support for Popular Unity and took their films directly to the people, through trades unions, schools and in open air meetings. It was quite obvious that they would otherwise never reach an audience of more than a few thousands. Littin's *El Chacal de Nahueltoro* was quite exceptional in reaching an audience of half a million; Francia's *Morir un poco* (*To Die a Little*) reached only 190,000 and yet had to be considered successful; Charles Elssesser's *Los testigos* (*The Witnesses*) was not distributed at all until after Popular Unity came to power.

And yet Frei's Christian Democrat Government (1964–70) had been obliged to take an interest in the state of the film industry because of the threat which was posed by the development of an independent film culture. The Council for the Promotion of the Film Industry, set up in 1967, was a weighty bureaucratic organism, and was superseded when Popular Unity came to power by the simple expedient of putting Chile Films in the charge of the film makers' Committee of Support for Popular Unity, with Miguel Littin as its new

\* See also Appendix Two.



President. (There were two further Presidents of Chile Films before the end of Popular Unity.) And yet the internal structure of Chile Films under Popular Unity was extremely problematic. Firstly, the incumbent bureaucrats could not just be removed. (Before Popular Unity took power, the Christian Democrats, who held the balance of power in Congress, had refused to confirm Allende's election unless he signed 'Democratic Guarantees' which severely restricted the President's normal powers: Allende was unable to remove civil servants from their jobs.) Secondly, as with all other such institutions in Chile, the structure of Popular Unity was reproduced within it. Given that there was no clear Government policy in relation to cinema, this meant that each Party group worked in terms of its own Party directives. The MIR had a presence too, though not at the top, and seems to have played an important role towards the end of the period in taking films directly into the *poblaciones* which were in the process of organising themselves. Another problem in Chile Films was that its installations were old and out of date.

There was one fundamental problem, however. The film makers believed that cinema should be considered a social function, like hospitals or housing, and that it should therefore be taken out of the control of the market. But official Popular Unity thinking was based on the idea of a socialised market economy, and posed the problem of socialist transformation in terms of a battle for production in key sectors, either those concerned with export earnings or those providing basic necessities neglected by capitalist development (or rather, underdevelopment) because they were less profitable than the production of luxury goods for a small market. Perhaps Popular Unity didn't know what to do about film because in economist terms, films cannot be considered a necessity. And as Mattelart has said, 'it was difficult for certain sectors of the left to conceive ideological struggle as an integral part of the class struggle.'<sup>22</sup>

This is one of the most important lessons to learn from Chile, because Mattelart's comment applies in England too. In fact it may be more of a problem here than in Chile, at least in certain respects. Here, in addition to the difficulty of continuing allegiance to Soviet ideology, we also have to contend with, for example, the 'workerist' deviations of a number of political groups on the left of the left, whose membership is predominantly petit bourgeois; which is to say that they seem to reject all positive and constructive thought about culture perhaps in an attempt to live down their class origins, presumably because they think this proves their revolutionary credentials. They seem to be conscious only of the working class rejection of bourgeois culture, and of the way bourgeois culture serves to co-opt people into the existing structure of domination: they seem not to have tried to investigate these things and respond to them creatively and with imagination.

This of course explains the split between such politicians and the intellectuals engaged in serious investigation of the structures of cultural domination. But this split also implies an unhealthy degree of isolation among the intellectuals – isolation from popular consciousness and its needs. Here too the lessons to be learnt from Chile are vital. As many Chileans themselves now readily admit,

there was little time for theoretical reflection during the course of the escalating struggle. But precisely this meant the development of a cultural practice which here is only in its embryonic stages. It was a cultural practice directed by the needs of popular consciousness, even if many of these needs were not properly or fully understood. Nevertheless, as Freire has pointed out,\* the emergence of popular consciousness implies at least the entry of the masses into the historical process applying pressure on the power *élite*. And this serves to define their real political needs. It is only a transitional phase, but it sharpens the contradictions and invalidates the static conditions – which means among other things the isolation between different groups, whether the left from the left or the right from the right – which prevails up to that point. How does this affect film culture? First, it affects film making practice as film makers achieve a new relationship with the masses which makes new demands on them. Secondly, it challenges the conduct of theoretical work, because this is so often carried out in political isolation, although some theoreticians try to justify themselves by speaking of 'theoretical practice'.

Theoretical understanding is of course essential, but it must not be divorced from the reality of class struggle: that is, it must not be based on abstract intellectual practice. Because, as Mattelart has written, the level of awareness in a society of the phenomenon of domination is a function precisely of the class struggle. And so, he says:

The political problem arises of how to raise the level of consciousness of the dominated . . . of the possibility of access to a demystifying reading of the messages of the dominant culture. Indeed, the ideological reading of reality cannot be and is not a speciality of technicians in ideological configurations, because this special practice tends to impose on reality an a historic structuralism, which is incapable of formulating anything other than rules for the way a discourse functions. Semiotics and the 'sciences of signification' are forever trying to assert themselves as a substitute for consciousness, trying to put themselves forward as the unique and indispensable key for deciphering the reality of domination. It is time to question the conception – and the class position [my italics] – implicit in the innumerable stages of analysis which tend to substitute a process of intellectualisation for the process of the real grasp of consciousness.<sup>23</sup>

Because (he continues) the fact is that the conception which lies behind these intellectual practices runs the risk of reinforcing the privileged position of petit bourgeois intellectuals, who reckon implicitly on the value of formal and academic models without considering what instruments are available to the working class itself in the process of deepening its class consciousness. Because these are the instruments which would have to be taken up in any project for a militant science.

Raul Ruiz, in the interview below, also speaks about this problem. He explains that there was a danger of importing into film making the kind of reading of

\* See *Cultural Action for Freedom*, Penguin, 1972.



culture which was practised by 'the god-children of Ferdinand de Saussure'. He points out that this would simply reproduce the same lack of contact with the masses and their political needs which was typical of the journals. This is something we in Britain desperately need to investigate, since this is precisely what has already begun to happen here. The fact that the level of political consciousness is lower here than it was in Chile under Popular Unity makes no difference to the fundamental issue; it only means that amid the confusion such developments proceed all the more easily unchallenged, and that those of us committed to independent cinema ('oppositional cinema') lie in danger of having to support, for reasons of solidarity, an avant-garde which is actually counter-productive. However, we should also try to learn from Chile that the political debates we need to foster here must not be allowed to weaken us in the face of reaction.

In common with certain other sectors of the media, one of the tactical elements sometimes employed by Chilean film makers was to invert the ideological signs within the existing structures. But as long as the consumption of aesthetic/ideological products and communications of all types remains within the market, then whatever changes may take place within the message, the same vertical and passive relationship of the receiver to the sender is maintained. It isn't of course a romantic question of freeing art. It's a question of destroying the control which capitalism achieves through the mass media (a process which often seems to escape the explanations of semiotics). Some people maintain that the decomposition of labour through the application of modern production techniques such as the assembly line serves an important purpose from the point of view of capital, over and above that of increasing the rate of exploitation, in preventing workers talking to each other when they're at work. Well, the invasion of non-working hours by the mass media is the way capital has of preventing people from talking to each other when they're *not* at work. Inside the factory or out of it, capital learns to rule time. In the factory, the worker is forced to work to a particular speed and rhythm. Outside, the mass media are the latest and probably most efficient way capital has to impose a similar kind of 'time economy', which appears to make everyone's experience homogenous, by imposing a universal time structure. But at the same time, the media possess a kind of anonymous authority which over-rides collective experience and robs people of the very meanings of their words, and this destroys the most basic and ordinary form of communication – speech and conversation. This can only be defeated by taking the forms of expression, of culture, out of the market, destroying the vertical delivery of the message and the conditioned passivity of its reception. And this was what the experience of Popular Culture in Chile was about. Remembering that we're speaking of a transitional stage, it would be false to think that the Chilean film makers succeeded except partially. I am told, for example, that at the showings in the *poblaciones*, the films were often criticised by the *pobladores* for their remoteness, or their failure to relate their themes to everyday problems. Partly this was a problem of format. Newsreels, for example, with their traditional assembly of short items, hardly provide the opportunity for really exploring

their themes on a down-to-earth level. At the same time, it seems that the *pobladores* often came to see the films just because they were a spectacle and nothing more. They came, and then they turned the occasions into an excuse for extended discussion, and the discussions ranged far from the starting point of the films. One thing, perhaps, is clear from this: popular consciousness in a state of mobilisation is not to be satisfied with mere propaganda or a mere reflection of some general aspect of its environment, or films which merely translate theory onto the screen.

Finally, these experiences raise crucial questions about the role and even the very concept of the artist and the intellectual, and these too are questions which are discussed in several places in the interviews which follow. There is in particular a marked difference between the positions of Littin and of Soto. Some people may see it simply as the difference between the intellectual who goes down among the people and seeks to become an instrument through which they can speak and learn to speak (Littin), and the one who cannot or will not give up his position as a privileged bourgeois, and evokes ideas of 'objectivity' and 'analysis of the situation' to defend himself (Soto). But this is a simplification. Soto has a form of honesty which is not usually to be found in the bourgeois intellectual! And although at one point Littin describes Soto as one who speaks to the masses from a balcony, Soto characterises himself as one whose aim is not to speak to the masses but to the intellectuals and political leaders of the left, trying to talk to them of what he sees going on below them which they may be unwilling or unable to see. In which case Littin's criticism may be somewhat misplaced. As a bourgeois intellectual myself, perhaps I'm not really in a position to judge. But is it an either/or question? True, sometimes the only really revolutionary position seems to be Littin's. However, there are enormous failings in the revolutionary left, for reasons which include those given by Mattelart: and the political leadership suffers from other failings, which preserve Stalinism and at the same time define the opposition to it, which only leads to the waste and destruction of political energies in internecine struggle. And in that case, Soto's position isn't only justified and necessary, but just as difficult to sustain and fulfill as Littin's. The point is that from the position of the intellectual it's actually impossible to overcome this contradiction, because you have to cross the barrier to a non-intellectual position in order to solve the problem. The problem is a practical one, not an intellectual one. At the very least, honesty – which in the face of party wranglings may yet be the most important and even revolutionary trait the intellectual can bring to bear – demands that we acknowledge the pressure of these questions, on a personal level, and in as plain-speaking a manner as possible, and simply demand that they be put on the agenda.





# Minamata

Japan 1971, 122 minutes, English sub-titles,  
Directed by Noriaki Tsuchimoto

FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 7.30



## Minamata—Kanjasan To Sono Sekai (Minamata)

Japan, 1971

Director: Noriaki Tsuchimoto

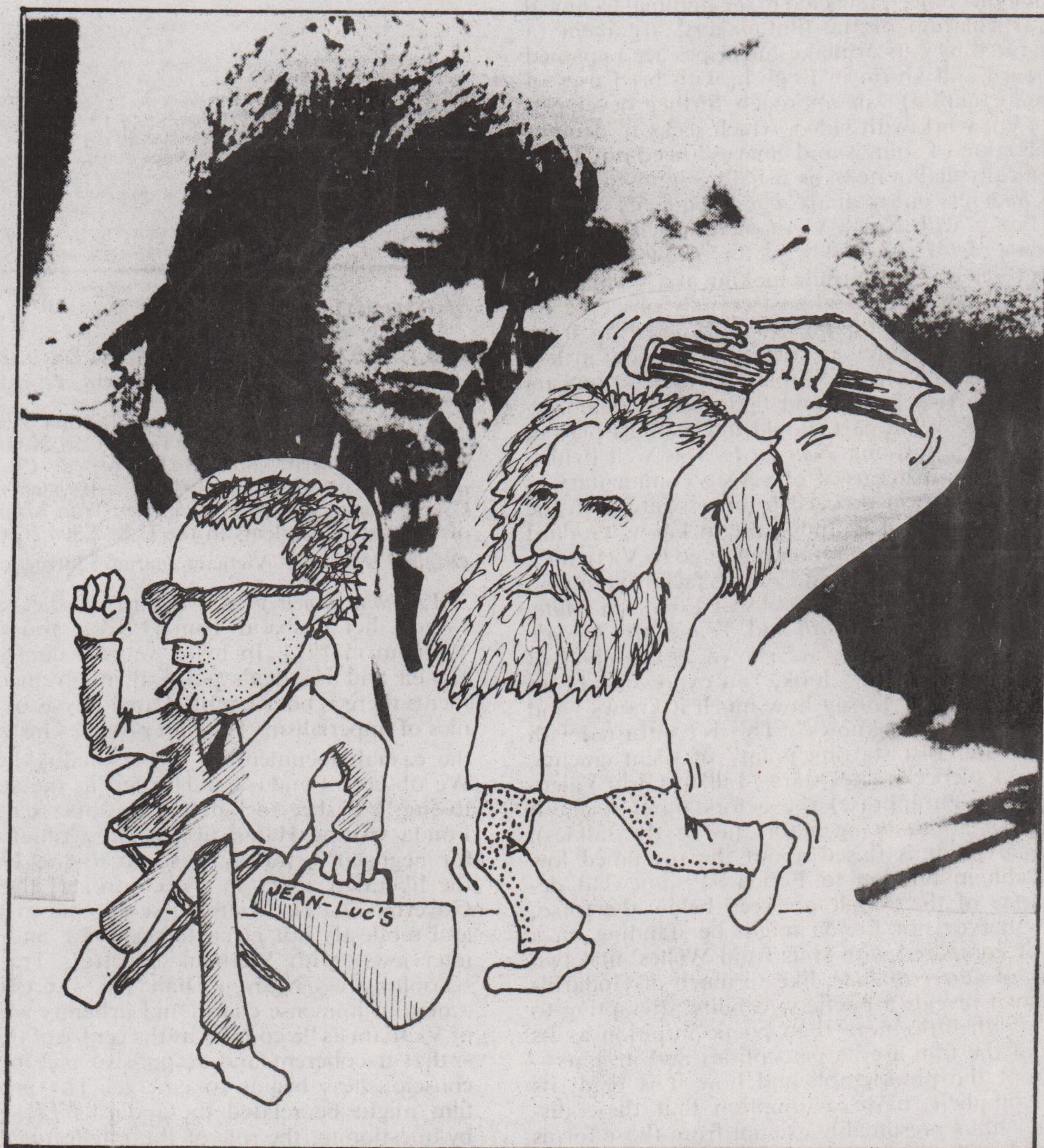
*Cert—A. dist—Contemporary. p.c—Higashi Productions. p—Ryutaro Takagi. sc—Noriako Tsuchimoto. ph—Koshiro Otsu. technical collaborators—Yukio Kubota, Masafumi Ichinosu, Suguru Hori, Takako Sekizawa, Koichi Asanuma, Takeshi Shioda. 10,730 ft. 119 mins. Original running time—155 mins. Subtitles.*

Earlier this year, and twenty years after the first symptoms of mercury poisoning appeared in the fishing community of Minamata, the Japanese government ordered the factory responsible for the pollution which caused "Minamata disease" to pay one-and-a-half-million pounds in compensation to the surviving victims or to the families of those who died. If the purpose of a propaganda film is to produce results and instigate change, then *Minamata* has already in some measure won its victory. It's a victory which the film owes to its admirable determination to avoid rhetoric and to concentrate on the steady accumulation of evidence. Its opening section gives an outline of the chief historical events: the outbreak of the disease in 1953, due to the waste discharge of mercury compounds into the sea from a nearby aceto-aldehyde plant; the invasion of the plant by local fishermen and the refusal of the factory's union to support reparation measures; the government's recognition, fifteen years late, of the factory's responsibility. The closing sequence records the violent, climactic confrontation between the white-robed villagers and the chemical company's president at the annual shareholders' meeting. Between these sections, the main body of the film consists chiefly of Tsuchimoto's interviews with the victims or their families. The disease's symptoms are patiently documented and illustrated—the early sluggishness and nausea, the loss of body and speech control, blindness, deafness and, for over fifty of the disease's huge final tally of victims, a slow and painful death. The director makes no overt attempts to tug at our emotions, but the tragedy of the victims interviewed continually breaks through the film's dispassionate surface: the camera holds a young girl's smiling face in close-up while we hear her mother's voice tearfully recount the onset of her

child's illness; a boy, intelligently parrying a succession of interviewer's questions, turns away with a quiet gasp of "That's enough" on being asked what he thinks about his own future. In many ways, the most impressive aspect of the story is not the horror of the disease but the resilience of the sufferers—a deaf child who 'listens' to gramophone music by feeling with his fingers the vibrations of the amplifier, the villagers who escape despair by channelling their energies into the campaign for just compensation. After the steady, piecemeal documentation of the film's middle section, Tsuchimoto restores dramatic momentum with the account of the shareholders' trip to the city to challenge the chemical company's president. As the meeting grows from confusion to riot to hysteria, Tsuchimoto turns his camera suddenly on a savage one-to-one confrontation between the president, smiling weakly through his spectacles at the gathering chaos before him, and an old woman from the village who stands shrieking tearful imprecations at him from point-blank range across the conference table. It's the one and only moment of outright anger—and release—that Tsuchimoto allows us in the course of his meticulous and diligent presentation of fact.

NIGEL ANDREWS





# A LETTER TO JANE

France 1972

Directed and narrated by  
Jean-Pierre Gorin  
and Jean-Luc Godard

55 mins / B&W / 16mm

English Narration

## VIETNAM JOURNEY

60 minutes

colour

16 mm

USA 1974

Cert. 'U'

London Film Festival

A film by JANE FONDA, TOM HAYDEN,  
HASKELL WEXLER.

Photographed by HASKELL WEXLER &  
VIETNAMESE FILMMAKERS.

With Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden and the  
People of Vietnam.

FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER 7.30



France, 1972 Directors: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin  
*Dist*—The Other Cinema. *p.c/p/sc*—Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin. In colour. *voices*—Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin. No further credits available. 1,861 ft. 52 mins. (16 mm.).

*Letter to Jane* was initially made to be shown in a specific limited context: as a short accompanying *Tout va bien* at the New York and San Francisco Film Festivals in 1972. As with all of Godard and Gorin's joint projects, the essential aims of the film are demystification and political analysis. More generally, it pursues a demystification of cinema itself as art object, reflected in the minimal technical means used in the articulation of the film-makers' argument (a montage of stills separated by cuts or makeshift wipes accompanied by the voices of Godard and Gorin in English, with brief uses of recorded music as punctuation)—an approach further developed by Godard's more recent work with video, which seeks to demonstrate that the "production of sounds and images" need not be as expensive or as technically elaborate as is usually supposed. More concretely, *Letter to Jane* sets out to analyse and demystify a single photograph of Jane Fonda with North Vietnamese which appeared in an August 1972 issue of *L'Express*. The picture shows Fonda in the left foreground in three-quarters profile looking at a Vietnamese in the right foreground whose face is almost entirely obscured by a sun helmet and the fact that he is looking at Fonda and away from the camera; in between these figures are other Vietnamese in less sharp focus, only one of whom is clearly visible—a man who appears to be looking between the two foreground figures at the camera. Starting with the question, "What part should intellectuals play in the revolution?"—an issue informing *Tout va bien* as well (which is a frequent reference point, in terms of off-screen commentary as well as stills)—Godard and Gorin proceed to interrogate both the picture and our responses to it; it is important to know, Godard says, "how each [of us] has used this photograph to go to Vietnam". Central to the analysis is the statement that Fonda's facial expression is "that of a tragic actress": comparative stills of Fonda in *Klute*, her father Henry in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Young Mr. Lincoln* and John Wayne in *The Green Berets* are shown as examples of what is described as the "New Deal" look, "an expression of an expression" that "talks, but only to say how much it knows" and "nothing more than how much it knows". This is contrasted with stills illustrating the "materialist starting point" of silent cinema, where "the expression of silence creates stars—Lillian Gish, Valentino, Falconetti", and (to paraphrase) the actors thought about being filmed rather than about being actors (as in the talkies). Still another ideological point is raised about the presumed low angle of the photograph in relation to Fonda—a somewhat debatable point since none of the people are seen below the torso, and it isn't clear whether or not Fonda might be standing on a higher plane—which is compared with stills from Welles' first two features. The paradox of *Letter to Jane*, like so much of Godard's post-1968 work, is that it reveals a poetic sensibility attempting to divest itself of poetry with little more than poetic intuition as its guide. The strengths of the film are its perceptions and insights—which are many—about the photograph and how it is read; its limitations lie in the implicit, naïve assumption that these discoveries are 'scientific'—thus presumably exempt from those forms of rhetoric found in the photo—and in the ensuing confusions, which are also many. It is worth noting that *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*, *Le Gai Savoir* and *Vent d'est* avoid this error, all three films raising basic questions about their own language as well as the language of others; but these works are still bound up in poetics, if only out of habit. In *Letter to Jane*, it would perhaps be more correct to say that poetics ultimately get in the way of the argument, because they wind up furnishing as much ideological rhetoric as they strip away. Having exposed the "New Deal" look of Fonda, Godard and Gorin go on to assert that the Vietnamese face in the background "remains a part of his surroundings even if we try to look at it alone" and "has a definite reverse shot" (i.e., reverse angle, a contingent reality): "behind him we can already feel the force of the astonishing incredible machine built by the North Vietnam-Viet Cong collective". Moreover, "no other revolutionary's face expresses as much daily struggle as this one". In short, a poetical insight squared by a political-emotional commitment—a fusion that can be seen quite sympathetically in its own terms—passes without warning or acknowledgement from formal analysis to metaphor to platitude, a distance traversed many times in the film. The issue is not whether 'poetry' and 'science' (or 'objective analysis') are incompatible—Eisenstein, Vertov, Snow and the Kubrick of *2001* have all demonstrated that they need not be—but whether they can be reconciled within the restricted framework of *An Investigation About a Still* (the subtitle of *Letter to Jane*, which inadvertently reveals that the authors are not speaking their mother tongue). But if the final effect of *Letter to Jane* remains

unsatisfactory and incomplete—virtually nothing is said, for instance, about the Vietnamese figure in the foreground, and the overall presentation is rambling and loose—it is none the less invigorating, engendering a process of examination which can proceed far beyond the point to which Godard and Gorin have taken it.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

## Vietnam Journey

U.S.A., 1974

Directors: Christine Burrill, Bill Yahraus, Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden, Haskell Wexler

*Cert*—U. *dist*—Cinegate. *p.c*—Indochina Peace Campaign Films. *ph*—Haskell Wexler, Phan Viet Tung, Cao Xuan Nghia. *addit. ph*—Ingela Romare, Lennert Malmer. In colour. *ed*—Christine Burrill, Bill Yahraus. *asst. ed*—Lisa Goldberg. *special assistance*—CFI, Mark Berger, Bruce Green, Bonnie Kozek. *translation*—Tran Minh Quoc, with the assistance of Vietnamese students in the U.S. 2,304 ft. 64 mins. (16 mm.).

*Original U.S. title*—Vietnam Journey: Introduction to the Enemy

*Vietnam Journey* is a record of the return visit paid by Jane Fonda, her husband Tom Hayden and their son Troy to North Vietnam in 1974. In many ways it confounds expectations, given Fonda and Hayden's political involvement in the anti-war movement: there is no attempt at an analysis of the war or of the mechanics of imperialism. The film provides instead something in between the casual document of a 'personality' tour and a home movie. We observe Fonda and Hayden in the streets of Hanoi, Hayden tossing a frisbee to kids on an upper balcony of a block of flats, Fonda visiting Hanoi film studios, observing the trial of a youth for negligence, travelling south to the 17th Parallel, and visiting the liberated zones in the control of the People's Revolutionary Government. The Vietnamese are shown to be courteous, friendly and modestly not given to polemics, and it is through a series of interviews—with Vietnamese actress Tra Giang, author and ex-schoolmistress Nguyen Dinh Thi, and editor Nguyen Khac Vien, a man of immense charm and urbanity who speaks philosophically of Vietnam as "a country at the centre of the world's contradictions"—that a coherent and responsive picture of Vietnamese life and consciousness begins to emerge. The problematic aspects of the film might be related to Godard's *Letter to Jane*, which begins by questioning the role of the intellectual in a revolution. *Vietnam Journey* reveals those same intellectuals in determined search of their role, and where the responses of the Vietnamese constantly force the viewer to revise his stereotypes of these people as (simply) suffering victims, Hayden and Fonda seem all too intent on thrusting them back into that category. If the discourse of the Vietnamese tends to centre on reclamation (literally beating U.S. bombers into bicycles, as one scene shows), rebuilding and resistance (Nguyen Dinh Thi speaks proudly of how her girls took to the jungle and comments quietly on a tradition of resistance going back to the early Twenties), that of the Americans inclines towards an insistent display of guilt, tabling the tonnage of bombs and the number of casualties. ("Now tell me what you like least about working with Americans" Fonda asks her clearly embarrassed interpreter at one point.) The photography tends also to lead the film in questionable directions as Haskell Wexler relishes the physical beauties of the terrain, the detritus of war, the swirling bicycle traffic of Hanoi, and the colour and grace of traditional theatre reshaped to revolutionary purposes. While a young girl speaks of shooting down American planes with old American rifles left by the French, Wexler cuts to a close-up, focusing on the girl's fingers gracefully and nervously twisting a strand of her hair into a plait—a sequence that displays Wexler's ever-ready romantic sensibility before anything else, and fairly encapsulates the film's strategy. But for all its hesitations, lapses of tone and occasional insensitivity, *Vietnam Journey* utilises its limited format to reasonably engaging and informative effect.

VERINA GLAESSNER



## RETOUR DE HANOI



Jane Fonda interrogeant des habitants de Hanoi sur les bombardements américains.

Deux Américains à Hanoi. Deux visions différentes. Le premier, Joseph Kraft, est un des journalistes américains les plus connus et des plus mesurés. L'autre, l'actrice Jane Fonda, est une militante acharnée pour la paix au Vietnam. Joseph Kraft est allé à Hanoi pendant une quinzaine de jours, au début de juillet. Son but : évaluer les chances de paix après les différentes initiatives diplomatiques et militaires du président Nixon. Sa conclusion : une solution politique est possible, mais peu probable. Jane Fonda est restée également une quinzaine de jours à Hanoi, invitée par le Comité pour l'amitié avec le peuple américain. Sa conclusion : les Américains bombardent les digues et la population. C'est un crime inutile, la guerre est perdue. L'Express s'est assuré le témoignage de Joseph Kraft et le reportage photographique de Jane Fonda.



# EXCERPTS FROM THE TRANSCRIPT OF GODARD-GORIN'S LETTER TO JANE



**This photo shows you, yes you Jane serving the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence...**

Jean-Pierre Gorin (JPG): ... In writing this letter which accompanies *Tout Va Bien* for the festivals of Venice, New York and San Francisco, we preferred using a photograph of you in Vietnam instead of photographs from the film.

Jean-Luc Godard (JLG): We found this photograph in an issue of *L'Express* early in August, 1972 and we think it will enable us to talk in a more concrete way about the problems raised by *Tout Va Bien*. This is not a way of changing the subject nor is it a way of not talking about *Tout Va Bien*, as if we were afraid of talking about a film. Not by any means. ... As a matter of fact, this photograph and the short text that appeared with it does a better job of summing up *Tout Va Bien* than we could, and for a very simple reason. This photograph answers the same question that the film is asking: What part should intellectuals play in the revolution? To this question the photograph gives a practical answer. The answer it gives is its practice. This photo shows you, yes you Jane, serving the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence ...

JPG: We're telling you that our way of not really giving answers yet, like the Vietnamese and you in the photograph, was actually an indirect way of asking new questions. An indirect way. A devious way. Now you can understand why we had to make a detour before talking about the film.

JLG: And why it had to be a detour through Vietnam. First of all because everyone agrees about the fact that some really new questions are being raised over there. And secondly, because you were with them after having been with us ...

JPG: This means that in order to have a real possibility of discussing *Tout Va Bien*, we're going to place ourselves outside of *Tout Va Bien*. To talk about the machine, we're going outside of the factory that uses it. We're going to find our basis for discussion outside of the world of cinema in order to have a better view of it when we return. In order to set out in a better way towards the real problems of our real concrete life of which the cinema will have been only one of the elements. We're not going to leave or abandon *Tout Va Bien*. We're going to go away from it; on the contrary, to go somewhere else, to Vietnam, for example, since you have come back from there. But what is important is that we're going to travel there by our own means. What sort of means are we talking about? The technical means we work with and the way we use them socially - you in the photograph from Vietnam and we in the film in Paris. And we will be in a better position to evaluate this and for once we will not be alone. The spectator will be there too. He will be a producer, at the same time he is a consumer and we will be consumers at the same time we are producers.

JLG: ... We are going to use this photograph then to go and seek an answer to the following question in Vietnam. How can cinema help Vietnamese people win their independence? And as we have already said several times, we are not the only ones who have used this photograph to go to Vietnam. Thousands of people have already done so. Probably almost everyone here has already seen this photograph. And for a few seconds, each in his own way, has used it to go to Vietnam. That is precisely what we think is important to know. How each one has used this photograph to go to Vietnam ... The North Vietnamese-Viet Cong Collective has shown what importance it gave to this photograph. The importance it gave to the questions of practical results; the importance it gave to the question of what is important. This photograph is therefore a practical answer that the North Vietnamese have decided to give with your help Jane to the well known question we asked earlier; What part should cinema play in the development of revolutionary struggles? Or in other words, how should intellectuals take part in the revolution? The photograph gives a practical answer to this question. The answer for whole people. The photograph has been taken and published. And it has been taken in a certain way to make sure that it would be published. *Tout Va Bien* answers this question too but from somewhere else and in another way. A way in fact of not being too quick to give this kind of answer. A way that is a means of saying, here in France where we are in 1972, ruled by the friends of the Americans and the Russians. Everything is not so clear. Everything is not so obvious.

Fidel Castro said at the UN that for revolutionaries there are never any obvious truths. That they are an invention of imperialism and that those who are big use obvious truths cleverly to oppress those who are small ...

There is another problem too and one that we can't avoid. We are both men who have made *Tout Va Bien* and you are a woman. In Vietnam the question is not put that way but here it is. And as a woman you undoubtedly will be hurt a little, or a lot, by the fact that we are going to criticize a little or a lot, your way of acting in this photograph. Hurt? Because once again, as usual, men are finding ways to attack women, if for no other reason we hope that you will be able to come and answer our letter by talking with us as we go reading it in two or three places in the US. ... In order to discuss all this, we are slipping this photograph under people's noses for a second look since the Vietnamese and you already slipped it there once. In other words, we ask and we are asking ourselves, did we really look at this photograph? What did we see in it? And beneath this question, we discover another question. For example, how did we look at this photograph? And what makes them glance that way instead of another? And still another question, what makes our

**This photograph is therefore a practical answer that the North Vietnamese have decided to give with your help Jane to the well known question we asked earlier; What part should cinema play in the development of revolutionary struggles.**

**And as a woman you undoubtedly will be hurt a little or a lot, by the fact that we are going to criticize a little or a lot, your way of acting in this photograph.**

After making *Tout Va Bien*, Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin produced *A Letter to Jane* (1972) to accompany screenings of *Tout Va Bien* at the San Francisco and New York Film Festivals in 1972. The following abridged transcript of the film's soundtrack is meant to serve as a stimulus to debate on the aesthetics of the visual image and the relationship of the "intellectual" to the "revolution". We asked Jane Fonda to reply to the *Letter* but she chose not to comment.



voice interpret this glance in a certain way instead of another?

JPG: *Tout Va Bien* asks all of these questions. These questions can all be summed up in the big question of the role of the intellectuals in the revolutionary struggles; or rather, this big well-known question about intellectuals, one begins to see that by expressing itself in that way it becomes paralyzing. And that it paralyzes others. And finally, that it is no longer a question belonging to the revolution. Today's questions about the revolution as we will discover in relation to the photograph, then in relation to the film, should be: How to change the old world. And one can see right away that the old world of the Viet Cong is not the same as the old world of the western intellectual. . . . We will try to explain the organization of these elements that make up this photograph. On the one hand we will explain things as if we were dealing with the photographic molecular structure and on the other hand, as if we were dealing with a kind of social nerve cell. Then we will try and show the connection between the scientific investigation and the more political one.



JLG: Where do the right ideas come from? From the struggle for production, from the class struggle and from scientific experimentation.

JPG: In making this investigation, questioning this photograph, we're doing nothing other than trying to find out how the answers that this photograph gives was produced in the context of the struggle in Vietnam

JLG: Then we will see the answer is entirely satisfactory for everyone. For whom? Against whom? And if perhaps other questions won't stop cropping up. Just those that *Tout Va Bien* somehow or other manages to raise. For example, an important

JPG: part of the photograph is the actress' expression, the relation between the eyes and the mouth. In western Europe, in our opinion, one cannot be satisfied with it as it is, obviously. Those who took the photograph decided it should be taken — the North Vietnam-Viet Cong Collective, and this at first seems absolutely normal — the context being different. But then one ought to enquire, as thoroughly as they do into what in society conditions this idea of what is normal.

JLG: In saying this we are not doing as most of the Communist Party and their allies in the western world the Pope, the UN, the Red Cross, who say simply, let us help Vietnam toward peace. Saying what we have said, on the contrary is saying something much more precise. For example, let us help the North Vietnamese South Vietnam alliance make its own peace; and even more precise, since Vietnam is changing its old world helps us change our own, how can we really help Vietnam in return. And since the North Vietnam-Viet Cong Collective is struggling, criticizing and transforming S.E. Asia, how can we struggle in our context for changing Europe and America. Of course, all this takes a little longer to say than just "Peace in Vietnam." And, it necessitates doing things more thoroughly than just creating 2 or 3 Vietnams. And that's why Marx in the preface of the 1st edition of *Capital* asked for readers who were not afraid of minute details in order to overthrow the king of Hell and free all these smaller devils. Faced with this photograph a few months ago by you Jane the Vietnamese and now by us again each person can if he's willing, make his own investigation. Then we will be free to compare the results and we will be able to speak without taking the desire to speak away from those who are listening. Perhaps we will be able, just for a moment, to say a little less nonsense about ourselves and the revolution.

JPG: And one more thing, so you won't feel attacked personally, although we can't really avoid it, we feel the question is badly put. But we hope that by the end of this letter things will be a little clearer and that's why we really need you to come and answer us

On the one hand we will explain things as if we were dealing with the photographic molecular structure and on the other hand, as if we were dealing with a kind of social nerve cell.

For example, an important part of the photograph is the actress' expression, the relation between the eyes and the mouth. In western Europe, in our opinion, one cannot be satisfied with it as it is, obviously.



directly because we're writing to you not only as authors of *Tout Va Bien*, but also because we have been looking at this photograph. And you must admit that this is the first time anyone who has seen a photograph in a magazine writes to you about it this way. So that you won't feel like our chosen victim, as they say, and so that you'll understand that we're not aiming at Jane, but at the function of Jane, when we're questioning this photograph we will refer to you in the third person. We won't say Jane has done such and such, we'll say the actress or the militant just by the way, as in the text that accompanies the photograph. In our opinion these are the principle elements or elements of elements that play an important part in this photograph which appeared in the French magazine *L'Express* at the beginning of August 1972.

**JLG: *Elementary Elements*.** This photograph was taken at the request of the North Vietnamese government representing on this occasion, the revolutionary alliance between the people of South Vietnam and the people of North Vietnam. This photograph was taken by Joseph Kraft who is described beneath the photograph in a text which was not written by those who were responsible for taking the photograph but by those who have published it, in other words, a text composed by several writers from *L'Express* who have not made any contact with the North Vietnamese delegation in France. We checked that. The text describes him as one of the most well-known and most moderate American journalists. It also says that the actress is a devoted militant for peace in Vietnam.

But the text doesn't mention the Vietnamese people in the photograph. For example, the text doesn't tell us that the Vietnamese who cannot be seen in the background is one of the least known and least moderate of the Vietnamese people. This photograph, like any photograph, is physically mute. It talks through the mouth of the text written beneath it. This text does not emphasize, does not repeat, because a photograph speaks and says things in its own way. The fact that the militant is in the foreground, and Vietnam is in the background. The text says that Jane Fonda is questioning the people of Hanoi. But the magazine does not publish the questions asked, nor the answers given by the representatives of the North Vietnamese people in this photograph. In fact, the text should not describe the photograph as Jane Fonda questioning but as Jane Fonda listening. This much is obvious and perhaps the moment only lasted 1/250th of a second but that is the 1/250th that has been recorded and sent throughout the Western World.

Being written this way, the text is probably trying to tell us that the photograph was taken at random during a discussion where the actress-militant was actually questioning the people of Hanoi and there-

fore we shouldn't pay any attention to the details of the mouth being closed but we will see a little further on that it is not a question of chance or rather, even if it is chance, the chance is then exploited according to the logical necessity of capitalism — the necessity for capital to describe what is real at the same time it reveals it. In other words, the necessity of tricking the customer about the product.

**LESS ELEMENTARY ELEMENTS. LESS ELEMENTARY ELEMENTS.** The camera took this photograph from a low-angle. Actually in the history of cinema, this low point of view cannot be considered an innocent one. This fact has been emphasized technically and socially by Orson Wells in his first pictures. The choice of frame is not neutral or innocent either. The frame is composed in relation to the actress who is looking, rather than in relation to what she is looking at. She is presented in the frame as if she were the star and that in fact is because the actress is an internationally known star. So on the one hand, the frame shows the star in a militant activity. And on the other it focuses on the militant as a star which is not the same thing or rather, which might be the same thing in Vietnam. But not in Europe or in the US. The following page shows photographs of what the militant saw at other moments but not what she was looking at in this photograph. As far as we're concerned these are the same type of pictures that now flow automatically through the channels of TV and newspaper publications in the free world. Pictures that we have seen hundreds of thousands of times, as many as there have been bombs and that doesn't change anything except for those who are struggling to organize this flow in a certain way — their way — the Seven Points of the PRG.

The truth is, if this photograph had been presented by some Miss Jones or Smith, we think the same newspapers would have refused it as too ordinary. Ordinary, one must admit, just as it has become a very ordinary thing for an agricultural community situated just outside of Hanoi to rebuild its schoolhouse for the 20th time after the phantoms of Kissinger had destroyed it. But of course nobody is going to talk about this extraordinary-ordinary fact. Neither the militant being given star-treatment nor *L'Express*.

**JPG:** Neither will anything be said about what the American actress or her sisters, the Viet Minh actresses that one can see in the photographs on the next page have said to each other. Did the American actress ask about acting in Vietnam, or how someone who acts in Hollywood can act in Hanoi knowing he must return to Hollywood. *L'Express* doesn't mention anything about all that. And we think this is because the American actress doesn't talk about it either. It's true that the militant talked about the anti-personnel bombs and the dykes but one must not forget that the militant is also an actress, whereas, the Russell Tribunal and Ramsey Clarke, for example, aren't.

**This photograph, like any photograph is physically mute. It talks through the mouth of the text written beneath it.**

**Did the American actress ask about acting in Vietnam, or how someone who acts in Hollywood can act in Hanoi knowing he must return to Hollywood. *L'Express* doesn't mention anything about all that.**



We think that one must realize that because she is an actress, the officials in the White House will have no difficulty, if no one tries to stop them, saying that the actress has more or less unconsciously played into the enemy's hands and that she is just reciting a text that she has learned by heart. Such criticism can easily destroy all the efforts of the actress and the militant. And one must understand why she remains vulnerable to this kind of attack. We think in this case it is because the actress-militant did not refer to the dykes by using an example as that of the Vietnamese actress who works to fill the holes in the dykes and then acts in a theatrical representation in the village that is threatened by the breaking of the dykes. In relation to this we believe that if the militant considered herself first of all as an actress, and the Vietnamese were making use of her due on their level, she could begin to play a part historically, otherwise than in Hollywood. Perhaps the Vietnamese do not have a direct need for this yet. But Americans probably do and therefore indirectly the Vietnamese do too. Once again we find the necessity of making a detour — the Vietnamese are obliged to make a detour through the USA.

JLG: In this photograph, in this reflection of reality, two people are seen facing the camera. The others have their back turned. Of the two people, one is in sharp focus and the other is not. In this photograph, the famous American is sharp and clear and the anonymous Vietnamese is blurry and unclear. But in reality, it is the American Left that is blurry and out-of-focus and the Vietnamese Left that is exceptionally sharp and clear. In reality, it is also the American Right that is always exceptionally sharp while the Vietnamese Right, the Vietnamization, is becoming less and less clear. What should we think then of the moderation of Joseph Kraft who took a moderate view of his contradiction, set the lens opening and measured the focal distance accordingly. It was all carefully measured as we have seen in relation to his choice of frame. And he intentionally set the focus on the star in militant activities in order to obtain a certain product — a certain ideological merchandise. And what's more with a deliberate aim in mind. Let's not forget that the processing of this product is directly controlled by Vietnam; but its distribution outside is not. Or rather it is but in a very indirect way, not to mention the feedback. This distribution is controlled by the TV networks, the newspapers of the Free World.

And so we see that one of the moves necessary to complete this act of communication cannot be made by those who have planned it. Which move? Or is it a move in some kind of game? And who has the right to play? And who plays for whom? Against whom? At this point we find and we will come back to it again later, that in examining the relationship between what seems sharp and what does not, in relation to the

two faces in the photograph, we have discovered something quite unusual. The face out of focus is sharp and clear, and the sharp and clear face is vague and out-of-focus. The Vietnamese can stand being viewed out-of-focus because he has been in sharp focus for a long time in his everyday reality. The American is obliged to appear in sharp focus because the Vietnamese way of remaining clearly out-of-focus makes this inevitable. The American is obliged to focus clearly on his real lack of clarity. But nothing of that sort is said in the text. The general effect of this photograph emphasizes that of another photograph of the actress on the cover of the same issue of *L'Express*. This cover composition is very revealing if one is willing to see that a photograph can cover up just as much as it reveals. A photograph imposes silence as it speaks.

JPG: In our opinion, this is one of the working principles of the two-faced form, Jekyll and Hyde, principle and interest, that information-deformation takes on when it is transmitted by images and sounds in our epoch which is that of the decline of imperialism and of the general tendency toward revolution.

JLG: The American Left says that the tragedy is not in Vietnam but in the US. The facial expression of the militant in this photograph is in fact that of a tragic actress. But a tragic actress with a particular social and technical background formed and deformed by the Hollywood school of Stanislavsky and show biz. The militant's expression was the same in the third reel of *Tout Va Bien* when as an actress she was listening to one of the film extras singing a text written by Lutta Continua.

JLG: The actress also had this expression in *Klute* as she looked at her friend, a policeman played by Donald Sutherland, with a tragic sense of pity on her face and made up her mind to spend the night with him.

JPG: We can find this same expression already in the 1940's used by Henry Fonda to portray an exploited worker in the future-fascist Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*.

JLG: And even further back in the actress' paternal history, within the history of cinema, it was still the same expression that Henry Fonda used to cast a profound and tragic look on the black people in *Young Mr. Lincoln* made by the future admiral of the Navy, John Ford.

JPG: One can also find this expression on the opposite side as John Wayne expresses his deep regrets about the devastation of the war in Vietnam in the *Green Berets*. In our opinion this expression has been borrowed, principle and interest, from the free trade mark of Roosevelt's New Deal. In fact, it's an expression of an

expression and it appeared inevitably by chance just as the talkies were becoming a financial success. This expression talks but only to say how much it knows about the stock market crash for example. But says nothing more than how much it knows. That's why, in our opinion, this Rooseveltian expression is technically different from those that have preceded it in the history of cinema. The expression of silence creates stars — Lillian Gish, Valentino, Falconetti, etc. Just make the experiment and have these faces look at a photograph of US crimes in Vietnam. Not one will have the same expression although all of them have the same knowing look.

JPG: FILM EQUALS EDITING OF "I SEE."

JLG: This is because before the talkies, silent films had a materialist starting point.

JPG: The actors say, *I am film*, therefore I think, at least I think of the fact that I am being filmed. It's because I exist that I think.

JLG: After the talkies there was a new deal between the matter being filmed (the actor) and thought.

JPG: The actor began saying, I think that I am an actor; therefore, I am film. It is because I think that I am. I think; therefore, I am.

JLG: As we have just seen in this experiment, which elaborates Kuleshov's before the New Deal expressed itself, each star of the silent screen had his own individual expression and the wide popularity of silent movies was a real fact. On the contrary, as soon as films began to talk like the New Deal, each actor begins to speak the same thing. Just make the same experiment with any big star from the world of cinema, sports, or politics.

JPG: I think therefore I am.

JLG: I think therefore I am.

JPG: I think therefore I am.

JLG: I think therefore I am. This expression that says it knows a lot about things that says no more and no less is an expression that doesn't help one to see more clearly into one's personal problems; to see how Vietnam can shed some light on them for example.

JPG: So why be satisfied with it and say, it's better than nothing — something gets across a little as in the union speech in *Tout Va Bien*, reel 3, or in the C.P. speech in *Tout Va Bien*, reel 5.

JLG: And why, even if the actress is not capable of acting differently yet; and even if we are not yet as



able to help her act differently as we would like to be, why should the Vietnamese be satisfied with it. In our opinion, we'll risk doing them more harm than good by producing a good conscience for ourselves in such a cheap way. Scientifically speaking, the movement from life to information is cheap. After all, this expression is also addressed to us — we who are making an effort to look at it a second time. These eyes and this mouth are not saying anything to us and for us, they are filling themselves with emptiness like those of the Czechoslovakian children in front of the Russian tanks.

JPG: Or the swollen little bellies from Biafra or Bengla Desh. Or the Palestinaian fleet carefully looked after in the mud by the UN full of emptiness, full of empty meanings. But watch out only for capitalism because capitalism knows how to fuck things up and fill the real eyes of its future enemies with emptiness, forcing them to look nowhere.

JLG: How can one fight against this situation? Not by banning the publication of this kind of photograph. One would have to stop all these TV and radio programs in practically every country in the world as well as the publication of practically every form of newspaper which would be token. No. But one could publish them differently and it is in relation to this difference because of their financial and cultural interest that the stars can play an important role, a very heavy role as they say. And the real tragedy is that they don't know how to play this heavy role.

JPG: How can one learn to play it. Many questions must still be asked in Europe and the US before we can answer clearly.

JLG: We are asking a few in *Tout Va Bien* as Marx did in his day by taking German ideology and raising the question of the misery of philosophy against Proudhon who only knew how to philosophize about misery.

JPG: If one looks carefully at the Vietnamese behind the actress; one realizes very quickly that each face is expressing something entirely different than that of the American militant. But even if one can't see what he's looking at, one can see that his face reflects what he must face every day — anti-personnel bombs, broken dykes and the torn bodies of dead women, the house which must be rebuilt for the nth time, the hospital and a lesson to be learned. Lenin said, "First lesson: Learn. Second lesson: Learn. Third lesson: Learn." And this face immediately reflects a day to day struggle for a very simple reason. It's not just the face of a revolutionary but a Vietnamese revolutionary. The long past of struggling has been written on this face by French, Japanese and American imperialism. In fact, this face has been recognized for a long time now throughout the world as the face of revolution even by his enemies. Let's not be afraid of words.

This is a face that has already won the independence of its own code of communication. Today, no other revolutionary face reflects as much daily struggle as this simply because no other revolutionary except the Chinese has made as long a march as the Vietnamese revolutionary. Let's make the experiment.

JLG: This black man for example. We cannot say right away why he's struggling or where and how — In Detroit or the assembly line of the Chrysler Corporation for better wages and a slightly slower work-rate in Johannesburg to have the right to enter a movie house where white people are showing white people films.

JPG: And this worker.

JLG: And this European girl.

JPG: And this Arab.

JLG: And this young radical.

JPG: As Uncle Bertold said, one must have the courage to say we have nothing to say about these faces unless there is a caption with some sort of nonsense or lies that we can swallow. And one must have the courage to admit one's weakness and failure for one has nothing to say.

JLG: This Vietnamese face on the contrary needs no words written underneath. Anywhere in the world people will say this man is Vietnamese and the Vietnamese are fighting to kick America out of Asia. Let's look, on the other hand, at the face of the American actress without the rest of the photograph. One can see right away that it doesn't reflect anything or rather that it only reflects itself. But a self that is nowhere lost in the infinite immensity and immortal tendons of the pieta by Michaelangelo. A woman's face that does not reflect other women. The Vietnamese face was a function reflecting reality; whereas, the American's face is a function that only reflects a function. A face that could also belong to a hippie needing a fix, or a student in Eugene, Oregon whose favorite runner, Prefontaine, just lost the Olympic 5,000 meters, or a young girl in love who has just been dropped by her boyfriend, and also to a militant in Vietnam. It's too much. There is too much information in too small an element of space and time.

At the same time we are sure that the militant is thinking of Vietnam, and not sure at all because she might be thinking of something entirely different as we have suggested. Therefore we must eventually ask the question why is this photograph of a militant actress who is not necessarily thinking of Vietnam being published precisely in place of that of an actress-militant who is necessarily thinking of Vietnam.

Because the true reality of this photograph lies in just this: A star disguised, unveiled by the absence of Max Factor. But *L'Express* doesn't say anything about this. Because that would be starting the revolution in journals. It would be the beginning of revolution to say in Europe and the US that today it is not possible to take a photograph of someone thinking of something — Vietnam, fucking, Ford Motors, factories, a sand on the seashore, etc.

JPG: Perhaps people will say we should not have isolated this part of the picture from the rest since it was published as part of a whole. But we think this is a very bad argument. We have isolated this part to show that it already stands alone in fact and the tragedy is in this solitude. If we have been able to separate this face from the rest of the picture it is because the face lends itself to this separation.

JLG: Whereas the Vietnamese face, on the contrary, remains a part of his surroundings even if we try to look at it alone. It has a definite reverse shot.

JPG: On the contrary, here, there is no reverse shot possible.

JLG: NO REVERSE SHOT.

JPG: In France, we are very familiar with the expression used by the actress in this picture.

JLG: It's a working model of Cartesian thought process. I think; therefore, I am — the same that inspired the statue of that figure by Rodin. Why not carry this statue around wherever there is a catastrophe in the world to inspire the crowds with a feeling of pity.

JPG: The swindle of capitalist art and humanism would be exposed immediately. One must realize that stars are not allowed to think. They are only social functions. They are thought and they make you think.

JLG: One just has to look at the acting of Big Thinkers, like Marlon Brando or any other mother fuckers to understand why capital needs this sort of thought to reinforce the strength of idealistic philosophy in its fight.

JPG: against the materialist philosophy of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao who represent their peoples.

JLG: We've said that we are able to isolate on the contrary the face of the American actress. Now we are going to isolate the expression of the country in this sentence — isolate, separate. Lenin said a revolutionary separation is needed to fight against the way capitalism separates workers into isolated categories. The face of the American militant and that of the North Vietnamese are opposites. The struggle of opposites is precisely what is happening in the



imaginary reality of this image. The American eye in Vietnam is satisfied with just reading the word "horror." The Vietnamese eye sees the reality of America in all its horror.

JPG: In this scene, the Vietnamese just appears in the background like a film extra but behind him we can already feel the force of the astonishing incredible machine built by the North Vietnam-Viet Cong Collective.

JLG: And standing behind the star we can see and sense the vile and deadly capitalist machine looking full of cynical humility linked with confusion: "Adventure is Adventure." In all of this we find a struggle between what still is and what already is; the fight between the old and the new.

JPG: The struggle which does not limit itself to the taking of this picture but is perpetuated by the way it has been published and by the fact that people in this theatre are looking at it this very moment. The struggle between the process of making a product and the process of its distribution depending on who controls the process — capitalism or revolution.

#### JLG: OTHER ELEMENTS OF ELEMENTS.

JPG: The North Vietnamese are right in taking the risk of publishing this picture. Or rather, they have their reasons for doing so. This picture plays the part of a small screw in the mechanism that has been conceived for developing their current military-diplomatic offensive. This picture is one of the 1,000 that the Vietnamese have given with their blood in answer to US war crimes.

JLG: You many have noticed by the way Jane that the Viet Cong-North Vietnam Collective often publishes documents of their struggles but seldom of atrocities.

JPG: In this case, the North Vietnam government has answered on behalf of its people and specifically representing the Committee for Friendship with the American people by calling on the services of Jane Fonda which means asking her to play a certain part.

JLG: And like what many Americans would have done, the American actress accepted to go to Vietnam and play this part. She went to Hanoi to help the Vietnamese revolution. Now, one must ask the question, "How does she help?" Or more precisely, "How does she play this part?"

JPG: The American actress at work in this picture is helping the Vietnamese people in their struggle for independence but she is not only helping in Vietnam but particularly in the US and Europe too since the picture has come to us in France as well. As we look at the picture here, then, we are freely obliged to ask:

"Does this picture help us?" And above all, "Does it help us to help Vietnam?" Vietnam forces us to ask this question.

#### JLG: PUTTING TOGETHER SOME ELEMENTS OR ELEMENTS OF ELEMENTS.

JPG: Neither *L'Express* nor the American militant have made the distinction between Jane Fonda speaking, asking questions and Jane Fonda listening.

JLG: For the Vietnamese, in the present historical stage of their struggle, the most important fact about this picture is that Jane Fonda is in it. And in our opinion, it doesn't matter much for them whether she is speaking or listening because the silence is just as effective. The important thing is that she is there. But here is 1972 the most important thing is not necessarily the same. We must learn what determines this "necessarily." We couldn't help observing that the text beneath the picture was lying when it said that the actress was speaking to the inhabitants of Hanoi since the picture plainly showed that the militant was listening. And since we need the contradictory truth of this picture and not its eternal truth, it's also important for us to make the observation that *L'Express* is lying on every level. But we must also add that if the magazine is able to lie, it is because the picture makes it possible. Actually, *L'Express* takes advantage of, profits by, the implicit authorization of the picture to hide the fact that the militant is listening. By saying that she is speaking about peace in Vietnam, *L'Express* is able to avoid saying, what peace, leaving this up to the picture alone; as if the picture said precisely what sort of peace was involved. We have proved however that this is not the case. But if *L'Express* can do this, it is probably because the American actress does not express a struggle as a militant by saying anything other than, "Peace in Vietnam," and because she doesn't ask herself exactly what peace and particularly what peace in America. And if she doesn't ask herself this yet or is not able to, it is not because she still acts as an actress and not as a militant. But, on the contrary, because as a militant she doesn't ask herself questions yet about what new approach or style might be applied to her function as an actress both technically and socially. In other words, she doesn't consider militant activity as an actress even though the North Vietnamese invited her precisely as a militant-actress.

JPG: And she's talking from some place other than where she really is in America which is what interests the North Vietnamese most of all. This is why she also covers up the fact that the most important fact about this picture is listening — listening to Vietnam before talking about it. Whereas, at the same time, Nixon and Kissinger are not listening to anything, are refusing to listen to anything at the Paris Talks. We must be able to examine this masquerade. And

unmasking Nixon hypocrisy does not mean saying, "Peace in Vietnam," because he says it too and so does Brezhnev. One must say the opposite of what he says. One must say, "I'm listening to the Vietnamese who are going to tell me what sort of peace they want in their country." And one must say as an American: "I'll keep my mouth shut because I admit I have got nothing to say about this. The Vietnamese must say it. I have to listen then, to whatever they have to say because I am not a part of South East Asia." The rest is just a masquerade. ★





This, a filmic letter by Godard, proposes itself as a critical response to a photograph shown in many newspapers throughout Europe of Jane Fonda with the North Vietnamese shortly after finishing her work with Godard and Gorin in *Tout Va Bien*. The camera is set for long periods of time on this particular photograph; and with the exception of occasional switching to other photographs and movie stills, the only movement is the movement of voices (both Godard's and Gorin's) expressing their reaction to what was shown. They express interpretations of the expression (or lack of expression or overabundance of expression) on Jane Fonda's face in the photograph as she is relating to the Vietnamese. I found it a very complicated look: one revealing pity, horror, disgust, confusion, and helplessness. Godard and Gorin label it the "New Deal" look and liken it to looks given in photographs and movie stills by John Wayne, Henry Fonda, Richard Nixon and FDR. They do, indeed, appear to have the same expression on their faces, or close to the same expression, which cannot necessarily be read as their expressing the same thing. Then, by implication, Jane's expression (or lack of it, or overabundance of it, or complication of it) becomes insincere, play-acted; she is an actress in this photograph and the look on her face, therefore, may not correspond to what she really feels... and it is suggested that unless she is a presence à la Stanislavsky, she may not feel anything at all. Her look (like the look of the others mentioned), the "New Deal" look, is a mask worn by the capitalist to sell his product. But this film, the director reminds us, serves as a criticism of Jane as a function, not as a person. Jane is really not herself in this photograph. Jane is the actress, the star. If you have some doubts of her role in this photograph, they are quickly quieted by a demonstration of photographic techniques used by the "political moderate" who took the picture. Stills from Orson Wells' movies are brought in to show how angling the camera up at a subject emphasizes that subject (or, in this case, function). She is made to look taller than the Vietnamese. We are directed to notice that she is in focus, while the others are out of focus.

Her look is intense, yet we do not see the impetus for that look. We do not, that is, see what she sees. The photographer gives us the back (and none of the face, since the man—is wearing a large hat) of the man (or it could be a woman) to whom she speaks. I make the same assumption the news reporter makes: that is, the article under the photograph describes Jane speaking with the Vietnamese people, while the photo shows her listening. The article, Godard reasons, is therefore, a lie. She is in focus. The only reason that particular out-of-focus Vietnamese man is in the papers at all is because the focus is on Jane. The interest is in her interest in Vietnam. The interest is in her interest in Vietnam despite the fact that she has no "interest" in Vietnam. She is not John Wayne or Henry Fonda. She is not FDR and most of all, she is not Nixon. Nixon is unlikely to be in Vietnam talking with the North Vietnamese because he has an interest in not talking with them. It is not in his best interest to go there. It is not in Jane Fonda's best interest to go, but she is there. It is to the interested public that the article is directed. The out-of-focus Vietnamese man is in the newspapers as long as Jane Fonda remains of interest to the public. What is this photograph saying? That Jane Fonda, the star of interest to the public, is seen surrounded by North Vietnamese who in spite of their being out of focus show themselves to be intensely tired of war and she is listening to them and she looks expressive of nothing. We are asked to see that, like the Pakistani child surrounded by the ruins of war (which we are shown a photo of), Jane looks expressive of nothing, surrounded by war. Perhaps Godard interprets her look correctly, perhaps not. We might wonder, then, why the North Vietnamese enforce the release of this photo to the world? Are they, too, aware of Jane Fonda's potential as a function? She may be equally used by the left. The North Vietnamese perhaps observe that she will be seen to be, not a star who is an activist to an activist who is a star, but an activist who happens also to be a star; a woman who is strong in her resolve to keep the wrongs done to the Vietnamese people by the United States in the eye of the public, despite the

fact that Jane Fonda is an American. Which reading is correct? How does Jane read it? Jane never can answer to that in the movie because Jane is a mere function in the movie, as well as in the photograph. Perhaps it would be in her interest as a human being to be the out-of-focus figure in the photo. We now should speculate how things would change if the Vietnamese man were in focus. Would he then be a function? Could we then show a montage of movie stills and photographs in which looks like his were apparent and undermine all meaning? Does the fact that he is a man save him from such a fate? The leftist North Vietnamese see Jane Fonda as a function. The moderate photographer as well as the newspaper owners on the left, right, and middle also see her as a function. The Marxist film director sees her as a function. They are all men. They are all doing something very familiar. Women throughout the world are seen as functions. They are used, among other things, to sell products for the left as well as the right. Men are used to sell ideas. Women sell themselves to sell products. The man buys the product because he thinks he is buying the woman selling it. He gets less than what he paid for. The woman buys the product because she thinks she will become the woman selling the product. She is right. A woman who buys the pantyhose or the shoes (seen in *Tout Va Bien*) becomes a promoter for the same product but with a large difference: she is not paid. This will always be the case for women: learn not, earn not, own not. A priori sexism precedes and undergirds racism. Jane Fonda is used to promote the North Vietnamese cause — or is it the American "New Deal" — or is it Godard's new movie? Perhaps the only valid criticism of Jane Fonda is that she has not yet learned that she cannot work towards ending wars through men. Woolf recommends one should work towards ending all wars by first working to end hegemony. That would mean putting an end to woman as function. That would mean that men would have to sell their own products to each other... and this includes their own culture. ★



# A Critique: LETTER TO JANE

Carol Davidson



Hi! BARRY BOXEDOM HERE.  
IT APPEARS THE INTRUDERS GOT  
IN THROUGH THE LITTLE  
PERFORATIONS IN THE SPAWS.

VENT  
D'EST

HOLD IT!

BOGGER  
OFF, EH!

WHAT KINDA  
GODDAMN  
WESTERN  
IS THIS!

THERE AINT NO  
FILM STOCK, PAL

WHY NOT?

BLEEDIN' YANKS  
GOT IT ALL!

SO INVADE  
THEM.

WHY?

THEY'RE CAPITALISTS!

WHAT DOES THAT  
MAKE US, SERGE?

IMPERIALISTS!

DREAM FACTORY

FRONT OFFICE

ENCOUNTERING VARIOUS PROB-  
LEMS ALONG THEIR ROUTE....

..THEY FINALLY FACED THE  
MAN!

WE  
DICTATE  
CINEMA

AAH!

JEAN LUC KEPT HIM TALKING WHILE  
THE OTHERS  
PREPARED.

THE SUCCESS OF THIS OPERATION  
MAYBE JUDGED AS THE SEASON CONTINUES  
INTO SPRING WITH...

MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA - VERTOV

THE NIGHT CLEANERS - BERNICK STREET COLLECTIVE

TWO OR THINGS I KNOW ABOUT 'ER - JEAN LUC GODARD

STRIKE! - SERGE EISENSTEIN

VENT D'EST - JEAN LUC AGAIN

A WHOLE LOAD BY STRAUB. MACHORKA HUFF BRIDEGROOM NOT RECONCILED COMMIENNE ETC.

ICE - ROBERT KRAMER

BLOW FOR BLOW.

BIG FLAME - KENNETH LOACH ANTONY GARNET

AND MARX  
SAID... EVEN  
I GORRA  
MAKE  
A LIVING

MAVIE BRICK ©